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**SCÈNES AND CHARACTERS**

**ILLUSTRATING**

**CHRISTIAN TRUTH.**

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**No. V.**

**THE BACKSLIDER.**

**By \*\*\***

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**BOSTON AND CAMBRIDGE:  
JAMES MUNROE AND COMPANY**

**1835.**

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# THE BACKSLIDER.

By . . .

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“What I see and hear  
Of sinful courses, and of nets and snares  
Encompassing the feet of them that once  
Were steadfast deemed, speaks only to my heart  
Of coming judgments.”

H. TAYLOR.

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# THE BACKSLIDER.

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## CHAPTER I.

### A ~~GOOD~~ BEGINNING.

"Providence helps them who help themselves."


THERE never was a more industrious couple than Robert Smith and his wife. Every one, who passed by their house, stopped at the neat stone wall by the side of it, and looked into their garden. It might seem like exaggeration to say that it was arranged with taste, for utility was the first object. The straight alley, that divided it, was bordered by flowers; but even in this ornamental arrangement, the prevailing principle, usefulness, was not sacrificed. Every flower contributed, either by its supporting stem or parent root, to the utility of the garden. Those that to a thoughtless observer seemed only formed to adorn the face of nature, were such as added to the wealth of the little home-  
stead, either for medicinal or culinary purposes. The shrubbery of currants, gooseberries, &c., not only served to mark the boundaries, but were planted on the inside so as to completely conceal the rough surface of the wall.

When Robert bought the spot, it was rocky and barren, and seemed to be out of the way of every thing. There was an old house upon it, that had the reputation of being haunted, because it looked so desolate, and had neither windows nor door. Some of Robert's friends advised him to have nothing to do with it,—for, they said, the last owner could not make any thing grow there, and actually starved to death after trying nine or ten years; and since his death he continued to return occasionally and throw stones at the windows, which afforded evident proof that they had not missed their aim. Robert, however, did not believe in haunted houses. He said, that if departed spirits went to heaven, they were too happy to want to come back again; and that if the evil one got hold of the wicked, he would take pretty good care that they should not escape him; and as for a man's having died in the house, he should like to have them tell him, where there was a house that men did not die in. Having thus justified his intention, he went to work to make the house habitable; and in a short time he and his wife, Susan, were comfortably fixed in it. He then began clearing the land from stones, and as fast as he collected a pile, he went to work to make his wall. Susan contributed her part to their prosperity. She could weed the garden and keep it in order, while he was employed in heavier work; and in winter, besides her cares by day, she found long evenings for spinning and weaving.

Robert had always been willing to lend a helping hand to others, and he now reaped the advantage of a kind disposition. Every one was now ready to aid him by half a day's labor, and when he made a bee, that is, had some job to perform that required numbers, his little hive was thronged.

The purest and the holiest pleasures of life are derived from the affections. Mr. and Mrs. Smith had two children, and they were very desirous of bringing them up in the love of God. Jane had just attained her eighth year, when she was seized with the scarlet fever. It were useless to dwell on the anxious cares of the father and the unwearied watchings of the mother; the beloved one was taken from them in all her opening promise. "Mother," said she, an hour or two before her death, "hold me in your arms till I go to God." It was a sorrowful parting, but both Robert and his wife were Christians. They had long felt the power of religion in exciting and animating them; this was the first time they had felt its power in consoling them. "How often," said Robert, "have I read this sentence without pausing to reflect upon it,— 'Come unto me all ye who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest.' It was necessary that my heart should be pierced through, before I felt its true meaning. Let us go to the Saviour, and seek through him the rest we so much need, for we are weary and heavy laden."

"For what are we to pray?" said Susan; "is it that our sorrow for the loss of our beloved child



may be lightened? Methinks I would not feel her death less than I do. We shall no longer hear her light step, nor her sweet voice."

"We must pray," said Robert, "for faith and trust, willingly to resign her. It is the want of this blessed faith, that makes our loss so heavy. It is this that makes us heavy laden, and for this we must go to the Saviour. The invitation is not given to relieve us from that sorrow, which nature must feel at such separations, but to lighten us of the sin which makes sorrow insupportable."

Many people talk of the uses of affliction as if it had a magic power of creating virtue, but we must only regard it as a *means*; it is often sent to recall our wandering thoughts, to soften our stony hearts, and urge upon us the hopes of immortal life. Woe be to those who regard it as having done its work, when it leaves them in tears and despondency; and double woe to those, who fly from its influence to scenes of revel and dissipation, for over such hangs a moral death.

The heart driven from one hold, clings to another. Walter, who was now Robert's only child, became the sole object of his parents' solicitude. He was a fine looking, manly boy, full of gayety and good-humor, and extremely quick in his perceptions. To give him *learning* became the favorite wish of his father, and it was not long before he had laid up a sum of money sufficient to send him to an academy.

In the mean time, Mr. Smith added acre after

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acre to his farm, as his small profits allowed; and when, at the end of two years, Walter, having completed his education, (that is, having learnt much more than his father ever was taught,) returned home, he found an additional hand was much wanted on the farm, and he cheerfully assisted his father in his labors, to the very best of his power. Nature had given him the talent, — perhaps the most dangerous among her munificent gifts, — of pleasing without effort or sacrifice; he soon became the pet of a small circle; his song, his jest, and his story were all applauded; his violin, — for playing on this instrument was his recreation, — was the delight of the young people who danced by it. Amidst all this admiration, Walter retained his gentleness and modesty. His parents had conscientiously sought to instruct him in the duties of religion, and he rewarded their efforts by indications of early piety. At church his attentive manner, and bright expressive eye fixed upon the clergyman, at length attracted that gentleman's notice; he invited him to come and see him in his study. Walter at first felt a diffidence that repressed the quick powers of his mind; but, encouraged by judicious kindness, he soon began to converse freely, and lay open his heart. "There is nothing," said he, as he turned over the leaves of one book after another, "that I love so well as reading, — or, at least, nothing but my violin."

Mr. Hope smiled. "You must beware of your violin," said he, "if you find it so enticing."



"O surely," replied Walter, "there can be no harm in a fiddle."

"No," said Mr. Hope; "it is as harmless as it is worthless, if there is no musician to touch its strings; but you must take care, while you are so fond of playing upon it, that it does not in turn play upon you."

"And make a fool of me, you mean," said the boy laughingly.

"We are always to be on our guard against pleasure, when it comes under the form of mere amusement, lest it should interfere with the more important duties of life, and rob us of what we never can recall, — time."

"I have nothing but my violin now to amuse me," said Walter in a melancholy tone; "I have read all my books through and through."

"If that is the case," said Mr. Hope, "I will furnish you with new ones."

- From this time Walter devoted his leisure hours to reading. His kind friend recommended books calculated to instruct and interest him, and his violin was no longer a rival. As his mind expanded, his taste became refined. The daily occupation of his life, farming, grew irksome. It must be remembered that Robert and his son were not gentlemen farmers; it was the manual labor of ploughing, planting, and digging, that occupied their time, and Walter often returned home too weary to enjoy his book. To Mr. Hope he first communicated his dissatisfaction. That gentleman entered with sympathy into his feelings. He saw that his mind

was capable of high improvement, and might become an instrument of mental cultivation to others. He had long been wishing to get up a school in the village, and he asked Walter how he should like the superintendence of it.

Walter modestly replied, that he wanted instruction too much himself to be able to communicate it to others. "If you faithfully perform your duty," said the clergyman, "this objection will be constantly diminishing. Knowledge is like a well; the more we draw from it the purer and faster the water rushes in. It will be proper, however, that you should qualify yourself by attending to those branches which are necessary to be taught, and study out the best way of communicating what you know. We cannot enter into any business without some capital, and the surest way of increasing it is to put it in circulation. This applies to mental as much as to secular affairs. Knowledge is twice blessed, blessed in what it gives and in what it receives; while you are educating others, you will be educating yourself."

"But my father,—how can I leave him to labor alone?"

"That is not necessary; your profit will be proportioned to the number of your scholars, and you can hire a laborer to supply your place."

"I see," said Walter, his eyes sparkling with pleasure, "that this is a most excellent arrangement. In the first place, I am but a poor assistant to my father; I cannot do half the work in a day that he does; an abler bodied man,

who understands farming and has his mind upon his business, would do him twice as much good. Nor is this all. Poor Sam Carter has been thrown out of employment, because the factory has stopped, and here is business for **him** at once. I do really think," said Walter, **after** a pause, "that things sometimes turn out very lucky."

"Do you see nothing but luck," said Mr. Hope, "in the arrangement of events?"

"O yes," replied Walter, assuming his Sunday look; "I know every thing is ordered for the best, and that every thing *is ordered*."

"This, as a general truth," said Mr. Hope, "is an important one; but we must apply truth, in order to feel its force. In this little chain of circumstances we may read the order of Providence, we may see how the right exercise of the faculties in one mind calls forth exertion in another; how we are made to depend on each other for virtue and usefulness; and how every station in life, and every faculty bestowed, contributes to the harmony of the whole."

Mr. and Mrs. Smith were upon the whole gratified by the plan proposed. Robert said he had often thought Walter was more fitted for head-work than hand-work.

All was arranged in due time. Sam Carter was hired to work on the farm, and Walter took possession of the school-house. It was originally a barn, but had, at a slight expense, been fitted with seats and writing-desks rising gradually above each other. On one side were

placed the girls, and opposite them the boys, and directly fronting the whole, on an elevated platform, the school-master took his station.

It is a difficult thing for a teacher to enforce obedience from pupils nearly as old as himself; but Walter succeeded happily. His deportment was mild and resolute, and though he found many trials, he supported them with patience and good temper. At the end of a year Mr. Hope's predictions were fully verified. His acquirements had been more rapid than could have been expected; and, with occasional instruction from his kind friend, he was able to introduce the study of Latin into his school, and gradually to surmount the difficulties of the language.

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## CHAPTER II.

### THE TEACHER TAUGHT.

"God takes care of our secular affairs, crowns the labors of the husbandman with sunshine or harvest, places us in poverty or riches as he sees best; but leaves our spiritual affairs and the keeping of our hearts to our own vigilance."

EVERY situation in life is open to temptation. The command to watch and pray always, is founded upon a knowledge of human character. It is not enjoined for the recluse or the monk, who tells us it is his business to pray; it is particularly applicable for those, who are abroad in the world, who mingle in the busy walks of life, who are tempted by the thirst of gain, the pride

of rank, the ambition of successful talent. Who is there so established in the perception of right and wrong, that, if he seeks to act conscientiously, he does not feel the want of aid beyond what his own mind can impart? The quickness of his powers, the superiority he possessed over those around him, the deference that his admiring parents involuntarily paid to his learning and station, were so many snares to the favored Walter. At nineteen, he felt that proud consciousness of intellect, which a really wise man seldom feels. His manners began to change; he grew dogmatical and argumentative; his opinions were delivered with an emphasis which seemed to indicate, that every word he uttered was worthy of note; even his step lost the graceful, unstudied lightness of youth, and grew measured and formal.

There is scarcely any employment which exhibits more fully the love of change and novelty, than school-keeping in a small town or village. One reason is, that there is so much of theory, and so little of practice. A flourishing advertisement, which sets forth every branch of education taught in the best manner, is compared with the process actually going on; the last is tame, dull, and necessarily slow in its progress, and is changed for the one that promises so much more. This, too, has its day, and yields in its turn to another competitor. A new school was now opened, which proved a successful rival to Walter's. This, united to his visible change of manner, occasioned at first a diminution in

the number of his scholars; by degrees one fell off after another, till at length he was plainly informed that the school-room was wanted for another purpose. Now, the first time for months, he sought the study of Mr. Hope, and laid before him his wrongs. He complained of the change he had experienced in the friendship of the parents, for whose children he had been spending the best powers of his mind; and now they had deserted him for a mere *quack* in school-keeping.

Mr. Hope heard him with patience. "I should be unjust to you," said he, "if I did not suggest that there are faults in yourself as well as in your employers. Your manners have given offence. While you have been thirsting for worldly importance, you have neglected to drink at the fountain of true wisdom. If we are not watchful over ourselves, how many weak and vain thoughts gain strength in our minds."

"Excuse me, sir," said Walter, "but I must say, that since I have entered upon the duties of my school, I have had little time for any thoughts that were not connected with it; and what is now my reward?"

"Well, Walter," replied Mr. Hope, good-humoredly, "in one respect you are as great a man as Cardinal Woolsey, who exclaimed, 'If I had served my God as faithfully as I have served my king, I should not have been deserted in my old age.' But happily you are but just beginning life, and, by the goodness of your heavenly Father, past errors may minister to

your ~~future~~ growth in piety and virtue. If the mind ~~is~~ filled with a sense of its responsibility and a humbling conviction of its weakness, there will be no room for vain thoughts. One thing always bear in mind, — that no man is wise who thinks himself so."

Walter left Mr. Hope's presence much less self-sufficient than he entered it. He returned home full of good resolutions. His deportment became more humble. His parents had felt that there was something in his manner, they knew not exactly what, which threw them at a distance, and they imagined it was his uncommon acquirements; but in his returning diffidence and self-distrust they again found their own Walter, and again felt the blessed influence of filial reverence and parental confidence.

Till vice has fixed its stains upon the soul, there is a redeeming power in youth. Moral discipline had a happy effect on Walter in all respects; he assisted in the labors of the farm with a more cheerful and contented mind, and divided his time between books and healthful exercise.

Amongst all those who felt this renovation of character, there was none that rejoiced in it more than Anna Hope, the only child of the clergyman. She was Walter's first pupil, and continued at his school till her father could no longer dispense with her assistance at home. She was amiable and intellectual. Her father had cultivated her mind with assiduous care, and her own taste had led her to seek amuse-

ment in pursuits that were hardly ~~known~~<sup>known</sup> in the village. She ranged hill and valley for the earliest and latest flowers of the season, and her herbarium contained specimens of the choicest native plants. In her little painted cabinet were arranged minerals, and gorgeous shells from far-off shores. Many who came to see her collection, wondered "that such a pious man as Mr. Hope could encourage his daughter in spending her time upon such useless things." They would have been right, if she had gazed upon them as they did; but to Anna they spoke a glorious language; and she was accustomed to say with the poet, "My Father made them all!" While she went to Walter's school, he had not singled her out as possessing any distinguished talent; but she was so docile and obedient, that he frequently gave her a word of commendation, which excited an ardent gratitude in her young mind. As she became capable of judging, she had marked the change for the worse in his manners, and ~~was~~ as quick to perceive the improvement. For the first time, she now alluded to the subject. "I think, father," said she, "that though the village has lost its school-master, we have got Walter back again."

"He has had a mortifying, but salutary lesson," replied Mr. Hope.

"He has been at school himself," said Anna, smiling.

"Yes, to the best of all schools,—one that is always open to a willing and tractable mind."



"It is a free school," said Anna, "and Providence is the teacher."

"True, my child; we should be miserable scholars if we depended solely on our own perceptions and powers of reasoning; they come slowly, and are often the fruit of hard-earned experience. But Providence teaches by events and by discipline, and in this admirable school we are almost compelled to learn; it is only the thoughtless and the vicious, that are deaf to its instruction."

"There is Walter, coming here," said Anna, looking out of the door which opened into the entry where they were sitting, and she hastily began to collect her work, and put it into a little basket that stood by the side of her.

"Why do you go?" said Mr. Hope.

"I thought perhaps Master Smith might wish to see you alone; but I don't think he will mind that I am here;" and she resumed her work, and moved into a corner.

Walter, however, did mind it, for after accosting Mr. Hope, he held out his hand to Anna, and kindly inquired after her health.

"We have been talking of a free school," said Mr. Hope; "I should like to know your opinion on the subject."

"I should be a poor counsellor just now," answered Walter, "after having devoted so much of my time to teaching and to so little purpose. I have met with nothing but mortification, and I will add ingratitude; and I have little heart to speak on the subject."

"And during that time have you gained nothing yourself?"

"I am afraid not, sir," replied Walter ingenuously, "or at least nothing in the point which you would think most important. I have been foolish enough to think myself wise, because I compared myself with the ignorant. I have been assuming and overbearing, and I think I have grown worse rather than better."

"And have you not reason to be thankful, that you have been stopped in this career?"

"Perhaps I have; but those, for whom I have been laboring, had no right to inflict the punishment."

"Anna and I were speaking of you just as you came in, and she was concluding that while you were teaching others, you had been at school yourself."

Anna cast a deprecating look at her father. "I am much obliged to Miss Anna," said Walter, a little resentfully, "for thinking of me at all."

"This school," continued Mr. Hope, "is the *free school* of which I asked your opinion. It is the school of human events, with their various teachings. When you first opened yours, you were modest and self-diffident."

"I know what you would say," interrupted Walter, "that I became conceited and overbearing; it is all true; but it was not for the parents of the children, for whom I had been laboring, to inflict the punishment."

A quick glance from Anna caught her father's

attention. "What would you say, my child?" asked Mr. Hope.

"I was thinking," replied she, "that those, who inflicted what Master Smith calls the punishment, held very subordinate offices in this great school."

"Pray don't call me Master Smith," said Walter, pettishly, "call me Walter."

"Anna is right," said Mr. Hope, not regarding the interruption; "they were the humble agents of Providence, who makes all things minister to his will; through these agents you have been brought back to the duties of reflection and self-examination. I would ask you, if it is your earnest desire to be a Christian?"

"I think I can say it is, but I am very far from being so."

"And does not self-examination point out the cause? Have you not been totally engrossed by your own pursuits, and have you not ceased to seek assistance from God by prayer? If you neglect the means appointed, you cannot hope for success. You cannot expect to reap the blessings promised by the great founder of the Christian faith, unless you become one of his disciples and submit to his conditions."

Mr. Hope looked at his watch, and found it was his hour for walking, and left the room. A silence followed. At length Walter said, "Your father is severe upon me."

"If you think so," replied Anna, "you do not understand him. He has your good at heart, and he speaks to you sincerely, but not severely."

"Do you know, Anna, I have serious thoughts of shutting myself up, and living alone, and seeing nobody?"

"You are jesting."

"No, upon my honor. I am convinced it is the only way I can ever be a Christian."

"That is not the way," said Anna, in a low voice, "that Jesus Christ pursued."

"Oh no, he was above temptation."

"And yet the Scriptures tell us, that he was in all respects an example to us, and equally subject to temptation."

"But surely, if we find we are too weak to resist temptation; it is our duty to avoid it."

"Most certainly," replied Anna, "or how could we repeat the Lord's prayer, 'Lead us not into temptation.'"

"Now we come to the very point. If I keep out of the way of temptation, am I not in the way of duty?"

"It seems to me," replied she, "that this comes merely under the head of a petition for aid, as we pray to be kept from fire, from drowning, or from contagious disease; but there are a thousand active duties enjoined, that would be wholly incompatible with keeping out of the way of these dangers. We are commanded to do good to one another, to visit the widow and the fatherless, to attend upon the sick, and to be constantly active. In short, as I understand Christianity, it sends us abroad among our fellow creatures, and is a state of watchfulness and warfare; we have weapons given us and instruc-

tions how to use them, and it is because we are unfaithful to ourselves, if we do not gain the victory."

"My dear Anna," said Walter, "I don't see but you are as good a preacher as your father."

"I only repeat what he has taught me."

"And he has taught *me* too; but I am afraid I am the rocky and barren soil, while you are the good ground."

As such conversation proceeded, Walter looked upon Anna with a species of wonder. He could hardly believe, that this was the same silent little being he had seen sitting by her father's side so many years. He forgot how the mind is matured by reading and reflection. Her mother died when she was almost an infant, and from that time she had been the solace and companion of her father. He devoted himself to the education of her character, and she felt as if her own mind received its light through his.

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### CHAPTER III.

#### GROWTH OF CHARACTER.

"We are too apt to imagine that we are religious, because we feel devout;—but it is the peculiar excellency of religion, that it teaches a man to look within himself, to discern the tendencies of his own soul, and acquaint himself with his secret purposes."

THE blessing which attends the industrious followed Mr. Smith. He had so much increas-

ed the size of his farm, that Sam Carter became an important aid, and even Walter's occasional assistance was welcome ; but he himself was, as formerly, the most hearty laborer, and all prospered beneath his care. It is true he had his portion of casualties ; sometimes the grain was blighted by a frost, sometimes a disorder prevailed among the sheep, and one year he lost a fine cow. When any of these mishaps occurred, they practised so much economy, and Mrs. Smith discovered so much good management, that her husband used to call them his thriving years. There is nothing that depends less upon a given amount, than wealth. He is wealthy who lays by a little more than he wants to use ; and it is no contradiction to say, that frequently the rich man is poor, and the poor man rich. Robert was affluent with his small income ; he was able to procure all the necessaries of life, and what to him were some of its luxuries. He was punctual in his payments, charitable to the poor, and deposited every year a small sum in the savings bank against time of need.

Neither he nor Susan had been unmindful of Walter's taste for study ; and they mutually determined, that he should have every facility within their power to give him. The want of regular employment might have been unfortunate for him, but for the friendship of Mr. Hope, who offered him the free use of his books. Walter read at first without much method ; but gradually his mind turned to the study of divinity, and it seemed to be tacitly understood, that he was to

become a preacher of the gospel. When Mr. Hope found that this was his deep and serious purpose, he did not discourage it; on the contrary, he gave him all necessary aid. Nothing could more strikingly illustrate the purity and elevation of the truths which occupied Walter's mind, than his whole deportment. He became fervent in his duty, disinterested, and self-denying; the very weaknesses of his character seemed to have disappeared before the power of truth. To follow the example of the Master under whose banner he had enlisted, became his great object. Nor did he confine his labors to his own improvement; he felt that there is no sphere so circumscribed, that good may not be effected for others; he became the teacher of a Sunday school, sought out the habitations of vice and intemperance, and strove by gentleness and precept to restore virtue and peace to the sinful. In the mean time, a new impulse seemed to have been given to the tenderness of his filial affection, and his gratitude to Mr. Hope displayed itself in a multitude of ways. He took charge of his garden, and with Sam's assistance adorned it with various beauties, and pleased himself with erecting a little summer-house that overlooked the Merrimac, on the banks of which the village was situated. Here Walter often brought his book, and sometimes, when Mr. Hope was engaged in writing, here too Anna brought her work, and Walter read aloud; often a striking thought of the author elicited remarks, till the book was forgotten. One fine morning while

they were thus seated, the conversation turned upon the goodness and power of God as exhibited in the landscape before them.

"How strange," exclaimed Walter with enthusiasm, "that any one can look on a scene like this, and doubt the existence of a God! For my own part, I do not want any stronger confirmation of this truth than I can find in his works."

"Perhaps," said Anna, "we are hardly aware, how much we are indebted to the revelation He has given of himself. You and I were born under a Christian dispensation, and the great truths of the gospel were early impressed on our minds. In this favored land, there is no one wholly deprived of their influence. They come like the dew of heaven, which is unseen and unfelt, but fertilizes the parched earth. We have only to look into heathen countries to see that those, who have not the Bible, worship an unknown God."

"No doubt this is true with regard to minds in general; but there are some formed in a different mould, who seem to have more immediate communication with the Deity. Have there never been moments, when you felt as if you emanated immediately from Him? as if the kingdoms of the earth were beneath your feet, and you breathed a purer atmosphere?"

"If such feelings should come over me," said Anna solemnly, "I should tremble lest they belonged more to earth than Heaven; not but that it is natural to believe, that the constant exer-



cise of piety and religion may bring us to 'a closer walk with God'; but it is by the means he has appointed, a knowledge of Him through the revelation of Christ."

"For the world, I would not undervalue that revelation," replied Walter; "it teaches us that we shall live again; but, even without that, I feel assured that my own mind would discover the existence of a God by his works. Were I placed on a pinnacle that overlooked the universe, with the same conception of natural beauty that I have now, if I saw its mountains and its valleys, its forests and its rivers, its everlasting rocks and the mighty ocean with its untiring billows, and, above all, the numberless beings spread over it endowed with thought and reason, I should exclaim at once, 'There is a God!'"

"You remind me," said Anna, hastily rising, "of a passage in Taylor's 'Holy Living';" and with a light step she reached the house, returned with the book, and read the following:

"If we could, from one of the battlements of heaven, espy how many men and women at this time lie fainting and dying for want of bread, how many young men are hewn down by the sword of war, how many poor orphans are now weeping over the graves of their fathers, by whose life they were enabled to eat; if we could but hear how many mariners and passengers are at this present in the storm, and shriek out because their keel dashes against a rock, or bilges under them; how many people there are that weep with want, and are mad with oppression,

or are desperate by too quick a sense of constant infelicity" —

Anna stopped. "Is not this a reply to your observation? If you were on a pinnacle, and could take this universal view of things, would it not strongly perplex your conceptions of a Deity? Would you not want additional light thrown on the subject? would it not puzzle you to conceive what sort of a being it was, that made a world so beautiful, and filled it with such spectacles of woe and suffering? Just so we are situated, and revelation comes to our aid, and relieves our perplexities. We learn from it that many of these evils spring from the free agency of man, without which he could not be considered a rational recipient of the goodness of his Creator, and would be no more a subject for punishment or reward, than the flower that involuntarily opens its bosom to the sun. Many calamities spring from the undeviating course of nature; the lightning, that purifies the air and destroys the seeds of pestilence, is sometimes the messenger of death to individuals, and brings woe and desolation. The tempest, that shipwrecks the mariner, is diffusing motion and vitality through the world of waters. With a conviction of God's universal providence, events that perplex us fall into their natural order; we see that what is often partial evil, is general good; and the devout mind is willing to trust in his promise, that 'all things shall work together for good to those who love him.'"

"I have always," said Walter, "considered

the great and essential value of Christianity to consist in its revelation of a future life."

"This does indeed," replied Anna, "make it tidings of great joy; yet, when we consider how large a portion of the teachings of Christ are precepts for thought and action, how much they consist in commands to love one another, to be humble, pure, and just, patient and long suffering, and returning good for evil; we may, perhaps, more properly consider action than *belief* as the great end of Christianity, and the immortality it reveals to us the high reward of holy action. There is a beautiful harmony, however, in the doctrine of a future life as acting upon the present. Holiness is the appointed condition of seeing God; and this desire of existence, implanted within us, becomes an instrument of virtue. We are exhorted to be pure and holy, not as supporters of God's moral government, not for the abstract beauty of religion, but for our own sakes, that we may inherit the joy that is set before us, and reap for ourselves immortal happiness."

"I have sometimes thought," said Walter, "that faith is a word for which we have no use, except as it relates to a future existence. We see so clearly the hand of God in his arrangements, and the chain of causes and effects is so plainly conducted by divine wisdom, that I never feel tempted to exclaim, as I often hear others do, 'How dark and mysterious are the ways of Providence!'"

"It is true," said Anna; "many things cease to be mysterious as we become more imbued

with the knowledge of God. In most events, aided by reason and revelation, we see the general order and harmony of his government; but there is one source of human calamity that exercises all our faith."

"To what do you allude?"

"The loss of reason, insanity. Sickness and death are not mysterious; neither is it so, that the vicious remain while the good are taken; but when a being, made in the image of his Maker, with high and noble faculties, is suddenly bereft of reason and becomes a maniac, neither reflection nor revelation points out to me the use of this dispensation, or its moral justice. But in the evidence that God has given us of his fatherly care, I rest satisfied that what 'we know not now, we shall know hereafter.'"

"It may be," said Walter, "that we do not on this subject bring to our aid the same reasoning powers that we do on others. Insanity is a malady from which we are in the habit of standing aloof, and considering it as a *visitation* of the Almighty. Men of the strongest minds are said to be the most subject to this calamity; or perhaps it would be more correct to say, of the strongest *passions*; and does not this fact give some clue to trace it to that general system of causes and effects, by which the universe is governed? Might not insanity be much less frequent, were children early taught the importance of self-discipline, and could they be made to realize to what the whirlwind of passion leads? Insane people often reason justly, and have a

consciousness of their duties and obligations ; but it would seem as if they wanted moral strength to perform them. It is worth inquiry how much may be done by education and judicious restraint to prevent or ameliorate this heavy affliction ; and we ought never to sit down in despondency, and view it as an incurable evil. Sometimes it appears to be the *sleep of reason*, from which, after a time, it awakes vigorous and refreshed ; and in all cases it is the sickness of the brain, and ought to be far less appalling than the moral sickness of the soul, *vice*."

In conversations like this many hours were passed by the young people. Walter's intellect and principles gathered strength by his present mode of life ; but, perhaps, Anna was less satisfied with his character than her father. It was not that he spoke to her with less humility of himself, for he often complained how hard it was to keep the balance right between worldly temptations and religious duties ; but Anna felt, from her own experience, that those who talk of their infirmities are seldom humbled by them ; that it is only a specious form of egotism. Often when he dwelt upon his former engrossment with his school in terms of reprobation, and said that nothing would induce him to resume it, she anxiously inquired, — "Is there no other form under which you dread temptation ?"

"O certainly," he would reply ; "but I will devote myself to a study which will make engrossment a virtue."

It was not long before his sincerity was put

to the test. He was solicited to undertake a school of a higher order than the former, with acknowledgments of his fidelity, and offers of additional emolument.

Perhaps there never was a season of more uninterrupted enjoyment, than that which was now passing with Walter. The light and joyous laugh of the boy had vanished, but his heart's content sat on his fair and open brow; he was engaged in a course of study, that lifted his thoughts above the low pursuits of life. All was peace within; his affections were directed to pure and worthy objects, and his mind was filled with tenderness toward those from whom he derived this consciousness of happiness.

Anna's character was far more quiet, and, to outward appearance, less strongly marked. She went through her daily routine of duties without any visible excitement; the menial occupations of life seemed to be performed by her as cheerfully as the highest. Often Walter thought; — "Anna wants nothing but sensibility, to make her a perfect character." That want was, in his view, an important one; because it prevented her from rightly understanding his character. His enthusiasm seldom found a corresponding warmth. He often expressed the wish which he really felt, that he could do something to prove his gratitude to her father for all his kindness. "You are every day proving it," she quietly replied. At length, however, the time arrived. Mr. Hope was seized with a typhus fever. Kind attentions were not wanting from numerous

friends; but the lingering tediousness of his disorder, united with the total prostration of his strength, required constant and devoted care. It was now that Walter was able to prove that his gratitude had not exhausted itself in words. He took up his abode chiefly at the house, and divided with Anna the care of her father. It was an affecting sight to see these two young creatures forgetting themselves in their devoted attentions to a parent and friend.

After many weeks of severe illness, Mr. Hope began slowly to recover. He was once more able to sit at the window and "drink" the air of heaven; to gaze upon the blue sky and green fields; to watch the tranquil course of the Merrimac, bearing on its bosom the little boats with their white and fluttering sails, which, as they moved on the face of the waters, seemed to the invalid to be sent forth, like the dove of the ark, to proclaim that danger was over.

Again Walter resumed his studies, which, for a time, had been laid aside. It seemed as if the near contemplation of death, in the dangerous sickness of his friend, had given new vigor to his faith; he panted for that path whose shining light should grow brighter and brighter to the perfect day. His excited mind realized all the fervor of devotion; it might be said of him, that his spirit, mounting on the wings of faith, love, and contemplation, ascended to the first principle and cause of all things.

Belief in God is but one part of Christian duty, and to most persons it is an easy one. The

heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth forth his handy-work. The mighty ocean speaks of him who lifteth up its waves, and who maketh the storm a calm. To believe and tremble, belongs even to the lost; to believe and worship, is a necessary connexion in the mind of the virtuous. But he, who is filled with a just sense of duty, sees before him a wide field of action; he realizes that religion is not mere belief in God or in the Scriptures, but is the putting that belief into effective operation in the constant and daily concerns of life. The young see with enthusiasm the beauty of creation. If they have sensibility, their hearts glow toward the author of it. There is danger of resting in this devout sentiment, which, even unassisted by the great truths of the gospel, bears the semblance of holiness, and for a time diffuses its peace; but it does not bring the resolution we want in order to face the storms of life. There is a wide difference between religion and sentiment. To feel good is not to be good. There is no business but what has its toils, and no secular profession in which we can attain eminence without long and patient apprenticeship. \* How much more must this be the case in the profession of a Christian, who must devote not only his time, but his very soul, to the work; who must bind his self-love, his pride, his sloth, to the altar, to be consumed by fire from heaven; whose capacities are to grow, till the whole universe becomes one page of sacred writ.

Of this, when Walter conversed with Mr.



Hope, he expressed an earnest desire for more extensive usefulness. "Be thankful, my young friend," said the good man, "that God leads you step by step to the practice of Christian duty; that you are called upon to exercise so gently your new-born strength."

"And yet," said Walter, "for what are our capacities given, if we are not to use them to their utmost extent? I envy the saints and martyrs of old, who were called to lay down their lives in the cause of truth. I cannot be satisfied with my present condition; for, I am told, religion is a state of warfare, and to me it is only a path of pleasantness and peace."

"The requirements of life are fitted to its present circumstances," replied Mr. Hope. "Hitherto you have been called to no trials of your faith; your path is circumscribed, and now is your season for acquiring spiritual gifts. The time, thank God, is past, when we are to evince our faith at the stake; but we are told the affections must be crucified; and you know not how soon you may be called to trials even stronger for your constitution of character, than the glorious death of the martyrs. You may be called to give up what you most value, or to resist temptation in its most insidious forms."

"And if so called," said Walter, "I trust I shall not shrink from the contest, but, through the grace of God, come off victorious. But how often I experience that restless craving of the soul to know more of the Divinity; how often I feel, that 'he is to human minds what the ocean

is to narrow vessels; — they take in as much as their scanty dimensions will admit, and yet there will remain an infinite surplus which we want room to receive.’”

“You forget,” said Anna, who had sat silently at work, “that the mind is not a narrow vessel of limited dimensions, but that its capacity of receiving enlarges according to its wants; and I cannot but think that this craving, of which you speak, is expressly given us that we may continue to seek for a knowledge of God, — not solely by reading and contemplation, but by the study of him in the creation, gifts, and government of the universe.”

“This,” said Mr. Hope, “is occupation for a whole life; it includes the revelation of his will in the redemption and salvation of the human race; the great truths of the gospel, as they relate to faith and regeneration; and the manner in which all may be best applied to the wants and sorrows of human nature. ~~And~~ this is spread before you.”

“Yes,” said Walter, “this is indeed a vast work; nor do I shrink from it. I have no wish to live in inglorious ease; and I have sometimes thought it my duty to join those who are toiling in heathen lands, amidst hardship and penury, to diffuse the knowledge of the gospel.”

“The gospel is not so well understood as you round about us,” replied Mr. Hope, “but what there is much to be done. Now, as formerly, the harvest is plenty, and those who labor with willing and active minds, have the highest and noblest duties to perform.”

## CHAPTER IV.

## THE SAILOR'S STORY.

THE harvest was now approaching. It was a busy season with Robert, and he was glad to accept of Walter's offered services. The change from attendance in Mr. Hope's sick room, to working in the open air, was beneficial to Walter's health, which had drooped, from the constant excitement of mind and body. One evening, as the laborers, Robert, his son, and Sam Carter, returned late from their day's work, they found Mrs. Smith engaged in earnest conversation with a stranger.

"Husband," said she, as they entered, "look at this person, and tell me if you have any recollection of him."

One glance was sufficient. "It is our brother George," he exclaimed; "welcome, a thousand times welcome!"

"Then you have got a corner left for a weather-beaten sailor; — but can this likely young man be little Walter?"

George Brewster was the brother of Mrs. Smith. He had always followed the sea, and it was many years since they had met. The first emotions had passed before the husband and son came in; and though now and then Susan's eyes filled with tears, they were quickly dispersed.

The evening meal was one of thankfulness and joy; and when it was over, Susan said,

"Now, my dear brother, tell us what has happened to you since we met."

"That I can soon do," replied the sailor; "for though time while it is passing seems to go at the rate of twenty knots an hour, when you look back upon it, it is always in a dead calm. It is a good many years since I was here, and a good many things must have happened; but it seems to me as if I could cover the whole space with my hand."

"The first five years after I last left you, I was all the time at sea, and pretty much in the same employ. We put into foreign parts, and stayed just long enough to get rid of one cargo and take in another. You may well suppose, when I landed at Long Wharf, at the end of five years, my first thought was to come and see you; but I had hardly put foot on land, when Captain Willink came up to me, and said he was short of a hand, for one of his men had that morning fallen overboard; and as I bore a good character, (I only use his words,) he would make me a *compliment* besides the usual wages, if I would start off with him. I was somewhat struck up; but nevertheless, I closed with him for the regular wages, and told him I would excuse the compliment. He was going an India voyage, and before night we had the harbour and the islands behind us."

"Captain Willink had the reputation of being a very stern, passionate man; but that made no difference to me, for I was determined to do my duty as well as I could, and that was all one human creature could ask of another."

"For some time matters went on very well, and though the captain often gave the crew harsh language, he never spoke so much as a cross word to me. One day, however, while at the yard arm, reefing the fore-top-sail, I accidentally passed the earing round the reef-tackle, which he perceived, for I must do him the justice to say there never was a better sailor, and he kept all his eyes open. When I was down, he ordered me aft, and giving me a cut with a rope's end, called me by every harsh name he could lay his tongue to.

"Not a word said I, for I knew it was my place to be silent; but the blow sunk deep into my heart. It seemed to me they all looked at me with different eyes. I grew melancholy, I could not join in their jokes, and every night, when I turned in, shame burnt upon my cheek and revenge in my heart. They all said I was an altered man, and they tried to laugh me out of it; but, though I strove to do my duty, my cheerfulness was gone.

"Never shall I forget that period of my life; it makes me shudder to think of it. Often, when I looked at the captain, I felt as if I wanted to seize him and jump overboard. I believe he was sorry for what he had done, for he more than once took occasion to speak kindly to me; but all did not go to the right place.

"When we were off the Cape of Good Hope, and scudding under a reefed fore-sail in the heaviest gale of wind I ever knew, the fore tackle gave way, and the ship broached to;

three of our weather main-shrouds parted; the captain, who was never sparing of his labor, was assisting in securing the mast, when a tremendous sea broke over us and almost entirely cleared our deck. Immediately the cry was heard, 'The captain overboard.' They threw out a hen-coop, which he was so fortunate as to reach and get upon. The stern boat was cut away and nearly filled in the fall. Not a man was willing to risk his life by venturing in her. Strange as it may seem, I forgot, at that moment, my revenge. I never shall go to heaven, thought I, with a bolder face, than in trying to save the life of a fellow creature. So in I jumped without more ado, and pushed the boat off. Every wave I expected would sink her; but at length I took him in; we both went to work to bail the boat, and at last, with great exertion, we reached the ship.

"As soon as we were safe on deck, and a little recovered, he called all hands together. 'This brave fellow,' said he, 'has saved my life,' (I only use his words,) 'at the risk of his own. You all saw me strike him the other day. I did it in a fit of passion, and I hope it will be a lesson to me. That blow disgraced me, not him. George, I sincerely ask your forgiveness'; and he held out his hand to me. My head went throb, throb, and I believe I should have fallen, if I had not burst into tears; nor was I the only one, for one of my messmates told me afterwards, there was not a dry eye amongst them.

"What is remarkable about this, is, that he

never, after that, fell into one of his fits of passion; his whole nature seemed to be changed, and, from that time to this, he has never been known to use bad language to any of the men unless they really deserved it."

"Do you think," said Robert, "it was being so near death, that worked this change?"

"I can't exactly tell what it was," replied George; "you know, Susan, I never was considered 'cute at finding out things; but I have a notion that when Providence finds the ship has a leak, he don't go to work just to stop up the hole, but he overhauls it, and makes a thorough repair. And I am the more inclined to believe this, because our second mate turned out a sad, drunken fellow, and he was seized with a fever and reduced to death's door;—we all thought he was going to die, and he thought so too; and he kept all the time praying for God to have mercy on him, and promising to forsake his evil courses if ever he got well. Now, thinks I, Providence is overhauling him, and going to put him in thorough repair; but, when he was out of danger, he was as bad as ever,—and then I knew he was a condemned vessel and past repair."

"The next port we put into, the captain left the hulk, and promoted me to be second mate. This was the beginning of my promotion. The next voyage he proposed my going with him as first mate. Well, I did the best I knew how, and, as the captain did not expect impossibilities, he was satisfied. After we got back from this

voyage, he one day told me that he was growing a heavy sailor, (I suppose he might be near sixty,) and that he should like now to keep in port with his wife and children; and the short and the long of it was, that he offered me to go master in his employ; and so here I am," added he, with an awkward sort of flourish, "Captain Brewster at your service."

"But why did you never write to me, brother?" asked Susan.

"Why, the truth was, that I always intended to come and see you; but, as I got plenty of letters from you, and knew all were well, I kept putting off the visit. As to writing, I had rather reef a fore-sail in the hardest gale of wind that ever blew, than splice a letter. So here's an end to my long story," said he, taking up the mug of ale that stood on the table, "and a health to ye all, not forgetting the lad in the corner." Sam had deserved this notice, for he had sat listening with his eyes and mouth wide open, as if those were the only avenues by which sound was communicated.

With what thankful hearts, they that evening gathered round the family altar, may be imagined. George and Susan had been early playmates, and it was a heart-rending thing to the sister, when her brother left her to follow a sea-faring life. For many a month, she thought of him on the stormy ocean; and often her dreams were filled with images of ship-wrecked sailors. When the wintry wind howled round her dwelling, and when the first snow came, sad thoughts and



many a sorrowful tear came with them. But time and habit familiarize us even to danger. Susan had long ceased to weep and tremble for her brother ; new scenes and new ties engrossed her mind. His presence, however, awoke her early associations, and her whole soul was filled with thankfulness, that he was again restored to them.

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## CHAPTER V.

### THE CUP FILLED TO THE BRIM.

MR. HOPE'S sickness had been a great interruption to public worship. The pulpit had not for weeks been regularly supplied ; and another Sunday was approaching, and no prospect of a preacher. At a meeting of the parish, it was voted that Walter should be invited to perform the services, till their clergyman was well enough to resume his office. Walter, after consulting Mr. Hope, consented to the arrangement, and requested him to select a sermon from his library for him to read. This had taken place the week of Captain Brewster's arrival ; and the Sunday following was the one on which he was to officiate for the first time. " May I not hope," said he to Anna, " that you will attend the service ? "

" It must depend entirely on my father's health," replied she ; " if it is one of his well days, I think I may go."

"I ask it as a favor," said Walter, "I should rely so much on your sincerity and judgment."

"You need not ask as a favor," said Anna, "what I should consider a privilege."

The sabbath morning rose in all the beauty of a New England autumn. The air was so soft and still, that even the sound of the few leaves that were falling could be distinctly heard. It was one of those mornings, when "earth a sabbath keeps"; when we seem to look into the clear, blue sky, as if we saw the heavens beyond it. It was a happy day for Robert and his family; — who does not tremble when the cup is filled to the brim? Walter, though cheerful, was solemn; it was an era in his life, and he was deeply impressed with its importance.

"I suppose, brother," said Robert, as they sat at the breakfast-table, "that Sunday at sea is pretty much like other days."

"In some respects it is," said George; "but we have our Bibles, and it is our own fault if we don't read them. I have a notion that churches are made for the people, and not for the Almighty; and that the deck of a vessel is as good a place, if you don't happen to have a better, for praying and psalm-singing, as any other. Many and many's the time, when I have leant over the side of the vessel, and seemed to see down a hundred fathoms, that I have thought of that verse, — 'They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters, these see the works of the Lord, and his wonders in the deep.'"

When they entered the church, Walter cast a glance at the parsonage pew ; it was empty. It has been before observed, that nature had been liberal to him in her gifts ; his countenance was more than prepossessing, it was handsome ; his voice was clear, deep-toned, and full of sensibility. He performed the services much to the satisfaction of the audience, and, when church was over, the grey-headed and the young were eloquent in his praise. And who will be severe on the parents, if a little human pride mingled with the devout gratitude they felt ?

Anna had looked forward with much interest to the day ; she arose earlier than was her usual custom, even on the sabbath. Her household duties were performed and dismissed from her mind, and then came her time for religious duties. Her father's breakfast was next to be prepared, which she would not trust to her domestic ; after he was up and dressed, if he appeared comfortable, she thought there would be nothing to prevent her going to church. That she depended much on this enjoyment might have been conjectured from a little more hurry of manner than usual. Every thing had proceeded as she had planned ; her father, though feeble, was more comfortable than usual ; the hour of church grew near. Why was it that Anna, who was so open and ingenuous, now hesitated to express her wish to her father ? She went to the window, and remarked upon the fine weather, and then said what a happy day this must be for Mrs. Smith. She hoped her father might himself propose her

going to church, but he apparently did not think of it. At length she said, "That is an excellent sermon you selected for Walter; how I should like to hear it."

"Should you?" said Mr. Hope; "well, I have another volume which contains the sermon, and you shall read it to me, my dear; I think I am well enough to hear it."

Anna saw that it did not enter her father's head, that it would give her more pleasure to hear Walter read the sermon, than to read it herself. At that moment the domestic opened the door, and offered her services to stay with Mr. Hope, if Anna wished to go to church. She looked at her father, and saw a slight cloud come over his countenance; "No, Sally," said she, "I shall not go."

"If you think I am well enough to be left, Anna," said Mr. Hope, "perhaps the walk will do you good."

"No, father," she replied, in a cheerful voice, "I will stay and read to you."

She arose, and went to the other side of the room to search for the book. Those, who remember that the disappointments of youth are not to be estimated by their *apparent* importance, will perhaps excuse the few involuntary tears which fell from her eyes, and which she hastily dried away, and then returned to her father with the book in her hand.

In the evening Walter came, and brought his uncle to see Mr. Hope. "I am afraid, sir," said

he, anxiously and tenderly, "you have had a sick day?"

"No, on the contrary," replied Mr. Hope, "I have been remarkably well. So well that I told Anna she had better go to church this morning; but she preferred staying at home and reading to me."

The color rose into Anna's cheeks, as Walter cast upon her a reproachful glance; but there was no opportunity for explanation, and he went away more than ever convinced, that she wanted sensibility.

There is something truly interesting in the character of the frank-hearted, generous sailor; we associate him with the dangers of the elements at sea, and behold him surrounded by frightful temptations on land. No class of society has, till within a few years, been so much neglected; profaneness and immorality have been so blended with courage and generosity, that they have seemed to be considered as the ground-work of the sailor's character. Many a theatrical representation, and modern as well as ancient novel, derives its poignancy and wit from ludicrous incongruities between virtue and vice, which seamen so often exhibit; and while the purpose is answered of amusement to the reading part of society, they might truly say, with the frogs in the fable, "This is sport to you, and death to us." But we hail a more benign day, for this neglected class. Gifted men are devoting themselves to their moral and religious improvement; men, who speak not from mere speculation, but who have themselves

ploughed the ocean, and who know the besetting dangers, temptations, and wants of those sons of the deep. God speed their work! May the good everywhere speed it, and "the blessing of those that were ready to perish come upon them"!

Both Mr. Hope and Anna took much pleasure in Captain Brewster's society, and he never let a day pass without calling to see them. His description of storms at sea, of foreign countries, and of foreign people, were a never-ending source of interest to them both, and did much to beguile the weary hours of Mr. Hope's convalescence. Two months passed in happy intercourse. The first interruption was Captain Brewster's announcing that he must shortly return, and prepare for his voyage. "I wish," said he to his brother, "to inform you that I am well off in the world; my wants have always been few, and when I have received money, I have put it at interest. I have now three thousand dollars lying useless, and if you want any part of them, or even the whole, they are at your service."

Robert thanked him, but told him that he was able to make a little more than a living every year, and always put a small sum into the savings bank.

"As for my nephew," said George, "I don't pretend to be very *'cute*, but I can see well what is to happen."

"What do you mean, brother?" asked Mrs. Smith, looking alarmed.


"Why, if I can tell any thing by a man's looks, death has entered your minister's name

in his log-book ; and then Walter will take his parish and have a nice little mate into the bargain, in his daughter."

"Pray, brother," said Mrs. Smith, "don't mention such a thing."

"Not I," replied George, "nor should I have done it now, only that I wished to say if you don't want the three thousand dollars before, it shall be his, whenever he marries with his parents' consent."

Meantime, Walter had discovered that Anna was not so much wanting in sensibility as he supposed, and it was soon understood that some explanation had passed between the young people of an interesting nature. A proposal of the uncle's brought affairs to a crisis. He said, that, before he could sail for Captain Willink, there was a vast deal of writing to be done, and that his fingers were so stiff and cramped by hard work, that he must employ some one to do it. He therefore proposed to his nephew, that he should return with him to the city for this purpose ; adding, that it would be a profitable job to him, if he only paid him what he should be obliged to give another. Walter told his uncle, that he had long had a desire to visit Boston, but he had never suggested the plan, as he was loth to put his father to any unnecessary expense ; but, if his services could be of any use to him, he should be very glad to render them for the accommodation of board, &c. Mr. and Mrs. Smith could find no objection to the proposal. Walter felt that he could not go without



some explicit conversation with Anna's father. Mr. Hope did not feel surprised that any one who knew his daughter, should love her; she summed up all that his fondest wishes could desire, and was, in his opinion, the representative of goodness and virtue. Towards Walter he entertained a fatherly affection. "There was a time," said he, "my dear young friend, when I trembled for you; but I trust you are now too well grounded in religious faith, and have too high a standard, to rest satisfied with low attainments. We are told that we must be perfect as our heavenly Father is perfect; this every one must feel cannot be in the degree, but the kind, of perfection; to show what that is, he has sent us a model in his Son. You have now engaged in the study of divinity. This is not a light work; it is not only to explain to men the beauty of religion, but to show how its practical influence may lead to salvation. I trust you will increase, as I shall decrease, for I have many indications of bodily weakness; and then how joyfully shall I yield up my child to such a son."

Anna conducted Walter from her father's room, for he seemed much overcome. Walter, too, shed tears in spite of his efforts; but Anna was calm and solemn. After a silence of some moments, he said, — "I feel a presentiment that there is sorrow in store for me."

"You feel this," replied she, "because you are sorry to leave us, even for a little while. You told me once, that I was as good a preacher as my father; be patient with me a little while



You once said you could not resist temptation. It is said the great city is full of it in some form or other."

"Perhaps, Anna, you had rather I would not go; if you say so, I will give it up."

"No, indeed; you remember I did not encourage your becoming an anchorite and flying from temptation; I only wish you to put on the *whole armour* of a Christian."

"Do you think me lukewarm?"

"No, far from it; if you trembled more for yourself, I should tremble less for you. I know the fervor of your feelings, and that you are capable of great virtues; but it is every-day watchfulness that makes the sum of Christian perfection, of which my father spoke."

"I have sometimes thought, Anna, that you did not comprehend my character. Those who have not the weakness of extreme sensibility, can make but few allowances for it in others. I think, however, I would suffer at the stake, like the martyrs of old, rather than renounce my faith. Do not tremble for me," said he, seeing her eyes fill with tears; "I have the strongest safeguards a human being can have,—pious parents, a religious education, and love for you."

"You often," said Anna, with gentleness, "accuse me of not understanding your character. Will you honestly tell me in what respects you think me deficient in knowledge of it?"

Walter appeared for a moment embarrassed. "It is rather an awkward task you assign me," replied he; "but as you desire it, I will hon-

estly tell you. It is evident that the very strength of my feelings, and the enthusiasm with which I engage in every thing, render you distrustful of my firmness."

"O no," said Anna, "it is not *that*."

Walter did not appear to observe the interruption, but continued. "Now, Anna, you cannot doubt my affection for you, even though I venture to say, that you have not that strength of feeling which would enable you properly to estimate mine; the want of it may belong to your sex, or it may belong to your constitution of mind, or possibly it may proceed from your quiet mode of life. All I say is, you do not possess it, and therefore you are distrustful of its influences."

"My dear Walter, is not this a difficulty you have created? I never recollect complaining of your strength of feeling, or zeal on any subject. Why then should you suppose that I am dissatisfied with it?"

"Because," said Walter, "there can be no other cause; this is the only peculiarity of character that in any degree separates us; in all things else, I am proud to acknowledge a perfect congeniality. I reverence the candor and uprightness of your mind, your devotion to your father, your uniform practice of Christian duties" —

"I am afraid," interrupted Anna, "that you will upset some of them by this praise; you must not make me vain or self-confident; for, after all, Walter, these are the rocks upon which we are most liable to be wrecked. Do not find fault

with me for the want of a gift that you say I have not received, — *sensibility*; but let us aid each other in acquiring those that are open to all, — humility and self-knowledge."

Walter looked earnestly at her. "Are these virtues," said he, "in which you think me deficient?"

"Who is there," said Anna, "that is not? But let this pass. Be satisfied, dear Walter, that you possess my undivided affection. We ought not to require our friends to be blind to our faults, but be contented if they will love us with them."

Walter, however, was dissatisfied that Anna had not sensibility enough to think him quite faultless. Though he did not acknowledge it to himself, he wished to be the idol of her thoughts, the object of her unqualified admiration. He forgot that there is but one species of love that can produce this infatuation, and that is *self-love*. It must be allowed that he was less imperious in his demands on others; he had every reason to be contented with the deference that was paid him by the village, where he was already regarded as the future successor of Mr. Hope. It was not merely his intellectual or spiritual gifts which called forth their encomiums. The beauty of his form and face, the charms of his voice and manner, were strangely mixed up in their thoughts with his learning and early piety. His parents and his uncle looked up to him as to a being of a superior order. Mr. Hope rejoiced in the prospect of consigning his darling to the care

and affection of so exemplary a young man. Anna alone trembled for him. With an attachment that had grown with her growth, that had begun in the early days of her childhood, before either party was conscious of it, — she alone saw that there were tares that might choke the good seeds. She had watched over the vacillation of his mind and purposes; she saw his strength and weakness, and she alone read *uncertainty* in his future course. But, while she wept and prayed, she felt that her own destiny was sealed, as far as earthly affection could control it.

The evening previous to Walter's departure, the two families passed together. There was much of heart-felt enjoyment among the group; but Anna in vain tried to be cheerful; for once, her sensibility seemed less under control than Walter's, — it became his office to console her. "Do not look so sad," said he, as he left her; "we shall soon meet again to be happy."

Anna retired to her room, the last word vibrating on her ear. "Happy!" she repeated; "I wonder how that word ever came amongst us!"

There are instincts of the soul, that are as powerful in their perceptions, as those which are bestowed upon the animal creation, and almost as little the effect of voluntary choice. Such, perhaps, is that which we call *presentiment*; and if we took the trouble to analyze it, we should find its source. We have a presentiment that some harm will happen to another, because we doubt his prudence or his judgment. There is no rational security for character, but in

undeviating principle. This is the enduring rock upon which the superstructure must be built, if it is to stand the storm and tempest.

An important era had arrived in the life of Walter. Hitherto his course had been like the river of the valley which winds its way between its native hills; it was now to emerge from its shelter and take a new direction. If refinement of feeling, high aspirations, a frank and generous temper, are security for virtue, no one stood on firmer ground; nay more, if a religious education, if fervor of devout feeling, could supply the place of principle, of self-knowledge, of humility, still we may say he stood firm. How much essential virtue and principle were engrafted upon his character, remained to be proved.

Mr. Hope observed that an unusual sadness pervaded Anna's countenance for a day or two after Walter's departure. He felt some internal surprise, that his disinterested, self-denying daughter, should indulge repining at a short separation from a friend, which was evidently for his advantage. How little we understand each other's hearts and motives, and yet how decided we are in our inferences! In many instances we feel that we have done wrong and suffered wrong; but we still go on "judging one another," and, as the ancients represented justice, give in our verdict with the bandage over our eyes.

Walter arrived safely at his uncle's lodgings. His first letter to Anna will best describe his situation.

## CHAPTER VI.

## FIRST IMPRESSIONS.

"If a wish wander that way, call it home;  
He cannot long be safe, whose wishes roam."

"It was a week yesterday, my dear Anna, since I arrived in this wilderness of population. I have been wholly occupied in writing for my uncle, and have now nearly completed my labors. You may judge how uninteresting this employment is. It is either made up of long invoices of India goods, with names that defy the organs of common pronunciation, and that sound as much like their heathen deities as like articles of importation, or of contracts and arithmetical calculations. I shall soon begin to devote my time to mental improvement. I foresee, however, that I must acquire knowledge by seeing and hearing, rather than by reading and thinking. I have no access to any theological library, and, as my time is not exactly my own, perhaps it is better to let things remain as they are. I cannot express to you the solitary feeling I have, to see myself surrounded by people whose pursuits and characters I know nothing about. I am sorry I did not take the letter your father so kindly offered; but I console myself with the thought of soon returning home, and of the happiness that there awaits me. I often fear that I am not grateful enough for the blessings that are showered upon me; and yet this very fear, I hope you will think,

is a proof that I am sensible of their magnitude. But this solitude, with so many faces round me, is dreary enough. If you could only see with what people I am obliged to associate, you would not be surprised at my discontent. They are generally sea-faring men, and my uncle is greatly superior to them. Yet I constantly bear in mind, that they are beings destined for immortality, and this thought alone makes my situation supportable. I have exchanged the pure air of the country for an atmosphere of tobacco-smoke, for they are great smokers here, and you know tobacco is my aversion.

"Last Sunday, the first I have passed here, was a happy day for me; I heard two excellent sermons; when I return, I will show you my minutes of them. I think, indeed, I shall have quite a treasure in this way, for you know how rapidly I take notes. I never so fully realized the blessings of the Sabbath, and that it was the only day in which all nations and all men meet on common ground. When, on my return from worship, I made my way through the throng that were passing each other from the different churches, those lines of Bryant's that we read together came to my mind; —

'Thy spirit is around  
Quickening the restless mass that moves along;  
And this eternal sound,  
Voices and footfalls of the numberless throng,  
Like the surrounding sea,  
Or like the rainy tempest, speaks of thee!'

"It was the first time since I have been here,

that I felt, without any effort of reason, that we all belonged to one family. How much more powerful is the influence of religion in procuring the great desideratum of all government, union and coöperation, than any provisions of law.

"I have been successful in procuring a few minerals and shells for your collection. I have much more respect for it than I had, since I find how costly these articles are, and how high a price your cabinet would bring. I believe this is poor human nature; we value things in proportion as they are desired by others. But this relates only to articles that have a specific value; there are friends and affections that are above all price, to say nothing of our high and immortal hopes.

"My uncle is always the same in all situations, acting under strong religious and moral impressions without the knowledge of tenets or dogmas. His illustrations are drawn from his profession, and I am often surprised to see how they apply to all the affairs of life. He is more liberal to me in a pecuniary way than I desire. The other day he came to me, and said, 'Here is a *handful* of bills; when these are gone let me know.' As I write to my parents I will not trouble you with messages. To your father I never, never can express my sense of his kindness; he has been more faithful to me than my own conscience."

The sequel of the letter was confidential.

The writing which Captain Brewster had supposed would occupy Walter three months, the



term fixed for his stay, and which no doubt would have occupied himself twice that term of time, was accomplished in less than three weeks. Still, however, he was often called upon by his uncle for occasional minutes, as the old sailor seemed to think putting pen to paper a much more arduous affair than doubling the Cape of Good Hope.

Walter was frequently driven from his boarding-house by the unpleasant atmosphere created by the smoke of cigars, when no care is taken to ventilate the rooms. In fine weather this is no great hardship in a city like Boston; but winter was fast approaching, and many a cold blast drove him back to the house for shelter. His uncle had introduced him to Captain Wil-link who had invited him to dine at his house on Sunday on roast beef and pudding, and to call at any time, which all the world agrees is no time.

Nothing is more difficult than to use leisure well. People must sleep to do nothing; the thoughts, the wishes, the projects of the brain circulate as freely as the blood, and lead as naturally to action. It is this that makes idleness, or rather the want of specific employment, peculiarly dangerous. When Walter returned home after his day's labor on the farm, reflection was rest; when he became engaged in his school, it was necessary for method and arrangement; when he commenced his study of divinity, it was digestion; but now, there was little to prevent it being the business of his life; he meditated, and

meditations became *reveries*, — the useless and idle roving of an undisciplined imagination. Much of his time was spent in revolving plans that were never to be realized; reverie became the hectic of his mind, and threatened to impair its vigor and energy. It is a common thing, especially in the laboring classes of life, to complain of want of time; but busy men are seldom unhappy. Providence equalizes its gifts, and makes employment and useful labor a much greater blessing than wealth and superfluous time. He is a fortunate man, whose daily tasks are appointed; who rises and goes forth to his work led by an unseen hand; for he is compelled to be industrious.

Days passed with Walter in this idle musing, which he dignified by the name of meditation; but at length a source of interest began to develop itself. A young man became a fellow-lodger, whose appearance and manners indicated a degree of cultivation wholly different from what he had been accustomed to see at the boarding-house. They soon selected each other from the rest, and entered into conversation. The new-comer, whose name was Heath, spoke with a gentleness of voice that was music to Walter's ear, after the rough tones to which he had for some time been accustomed. In a few days they conversed familiarly on various topics. Heath evidently possessed what is apt to be called knowledge of the world; that is, he took the darkest view of human nature; but he was careful not to let the superior light of his mind overwhelm

his companion's. He spoke modestly and cautiously of his own opinions, said he had the misfortune to differ in many respects from received doctrines, — that, from his youth upward, he had been *cursed* with a mind that investigated for itself, and took nothing from hearsay. Walter was not slow in giving his confidence in return for the slight sketches, with which Heath favored him, of his independence and originality of mind. He communicated some of the little weaknesses of his own character, — his intense sensibility, his high aspirations, his inordinate devotion to study. In a very short time a sort of compact was formed between them. Compacts, that are thus accidentally formed, seldom deserve the name of friendship; they are founded on the immediate convenience, wants, and even weaknesses of the parties, and open the flood-gates of egotism and vanity.

Walter's mind was unfortunately fully prepared for the evil effects of such an intercourse. The weeks of idleness and vacuity he had been passing, the hours spent in useless reverie, had had an enervating influence. "The allowed thought of foolishness is sin." If we keep open doors and allow every one to enter, we must often entertain bad company to the exclusion of good; for good and bad will not remain together. But few are unwise enough to do this; from the highest to the lowest, we choose our associates, and we know how to rid ourselves of an obtrusive guest. If we would observe the same rules with regard to our thoughts, we

should soon get rid of those that are worse than unprofitable.

“Guard well thy thoughts, for thoughts are heard in heaven.”

It is a common thing for a person to say, “I can’t help my thoughts.” But this is not strictly true. We banish those that give us positive uneasiness as soon as they intrude themselves; the humane do not dwell upon images of cruelty and torture, because they experience actual pain from them; others have a constitutional fear of death, and they contrive to banish the thought of it. These instances, slight as they are, prove that we can help our thoughts. But, as a distinguished writer has observed, — “After all our endeavours to dress the little garden of the mind, ill thoughts, like weeds, will spring up; they are the native produce of the soil; but if we take care to root them up as fast as possible, as well as to cultivate and cherish each useful and beautiful plant, this is all that God requires of us.”

Heath became the initiatory guide of Walter; arm in arm they walked the streets, or stood at the corners remarking upon the passers by. It was impossible that Walter’s conscience should not sometimes rouse up and speak better things; but he quieted himself with the idea that his present mode of life was to last but a short time, and that at least it was *harmless*. He had forgotten that the unprofitable servant was “cast into outer darkness.”

Ours is a land of liberty, and there never was

a time when every man more entirely assumed the liberty of thinking for himself. Hercules in his cradle is no longer fabulous; infants in intellect and knowledge, though full grown in stature, stand forth as champions and leaders of sects, and go hand in hand with the hero of Milton, —

“Better to reign in hell, than serve in heaven.”

We have gifted men who read futurity through spectacles of stone, and gifted women who cure incurable disorders. Heath requested Walter to go with him to one of the lectures of “free inquiry,” to which the public are invited. Walter gladly accepted the proposal; for he began to feel the fretfulness and impatience which arise from unoccupied time.

“You are fortunate,” said Heath, as they entered the apartment; “the person who is going to speak is one of the most gifted men of the age; you will be astonished at the march of his mind.”

What is meant, in the present day, by *gifted* men? It would seem as if many imagined it was a term which wholly belonged to the uneducated, to those who profess to receive no aid by the light of other minds, who consider ignorance a species of diploma which qualifies them for the most important discoveries. Such men as Locke and Newton are no longer gifted men, for their science was the result of learning and investigation.

Walter might be truly said to be astonished by the march of mind that one of these modern gifted men exhibited. For the first time he heard all that he had hitherto been taught to cherish, denounced as the trick of imposture, — not even discussed as the mistaken conviction of honest men, — and the very existence of the Being, in whom he had hitherto felt that he lived and moved, denied. The mind must be initiated by degrees to such assertions, to hear them without dismay. It was too painful, too degrading to Walter to listen, and he hastily quitted the apartment. He had not proceeded far, when he was accosted by Heath, who joined him.

"I saw you suddenly retreat," said he, "and I was afraid you might be ill; therefore I followed you."

"I presume," replied Walter, "you were as glad as myself to escape."

"No," replied Heath, carelessly; "there is nothing new to me in these discussions. I often attend them. I have heard you say you were seeking after truth; to obtain it, we must view things on all sides. If you wish, I will introduce you to the speaker, and shall be happy," added he with an ironical smile, "to aid your researches after this jewel."

"I thank you," replied Walter, coldly, "but I have no expectation of finding jewels among rubbish, and therefore shall not resort to this place to seek them."

"And yet," said Heath, "the pearl is found in the worthless oyster-shell."

"Nothing is worthless," exclaimed Walter, with his former enthusiasm, "that comes from the hand of the Creator. Every thing has its value and its use. It is man alone, that by his devices mars and defaces the beauty of creation."

Walter's mind seemed now roused to action once more. In how many ways are we admonished, and how much is there to struggle against before virtuous principles can be eradicated! A species of distrust with regard to Heath, rose up in his mind. He saw him apparently living without any profession or business, and without religious habits or impressions; and he began to doubt the propriety of making him a constant associate. An observation of his uncle, on their arrival at the city, recurred to his mind; — "My dear boy," said he, "I have not so much learning as you have, and there 's the pity; for I can read very well and without spelling, and therefore I don't see why I could not have got more learning; but I know the wickedness of the world better than you do, and, as I shall be a good deal taken up, you must keep a sharp look out for yourself. There is many a one in this great city, that undertakes to pilot a vessel, and carries it among breakers instead of smooth water."

Walter determined to be more guarded in his intercourse with Heath. He excused himself from their daily walks, and began to engage himself again in some useful occupation of his time. In the midst of this renovation of purpose

he was attacked by alarming symptoms of fever. For a day or two his uncle would not leave him; but, when the disorder abated, he felt the urgency of business, and consigned him to the care of Heath, who readily offered to supply his place, and was truly watchful and kind in his attentions.

Walter's conscience reproached him for the alienation he had lately felt; and when he saw him patiently sitting by his bed-side, he exclaimed, "How good you are to me, who have no claims on your kindness."

"Indeed you have," replied Heath; "all men have equal claims on each other. I would do just as much for you as for my own brother. Why should we hesitate in giving or asking favors? We ought not to be narrowed by the accidental circumstance of being born in what we call families; we are all of one family, the great family of mankind."

"That is certainly true in one sense, for we are bound to consider the Supreme Being as our common Father, and to aid and assist each other in all the charities of life; but we owe peculiar love and affection to those among whom Providence has placed us."

"Just explain to me," said Heath, "what you mean by Providence."

"I mean the train of events, the laws and regulations, by which God governs the universe. By placing us in families, and under the care of parents, he calls forth our best affections, pro-



vides for our helpless infancy, and secures to us sources of virtue and happiness."

"In my opinion," said Heath, "this would be far better done by society at large; and if the march of mind continues, an infant will not have to depend upon the imbecility and blind instinct of its parents, but will become the care of the community."

"Heaven help them when that time arrives!" said Walter, languidly.

"I perceive you are fatigued," said Heath; "try to get a little sleep; but first I am going to give you a proof, my dear fellow, that I act out the principles I profess. Can you conveniently lend me a few dollars?"

"Certainly," said Walter; "my uncle is more liberal than I desire, and he keeps me constantly supplied with money."

"A thousand thanks," said Heath, taking the bills that Walter offered him; "when you are in want of cash, just let me know, and you shall have twice the sum back again."

Walter composed himself to sleep with the pleasure that a generous mind feels in having conferred a benefit.

The next morning he was well enough to write a long letter to Anna. As it marked the progress of his feelings towards Heath, an extract is given.

"When I wrote to you last, I expressed some distrust of my new friend. I am convinced, however, that it was wholly unfounded. He has been my constant attendant, and, I may say, *solace*,

through my indisposition. It is true his opinions on many subjects differ essentially from my own ; but it would be impossible to bring all our opinions to one standard, and a very little intercourse with the world wears off the fastidiousness that we acquire in seclusion. He is several years older than I am, and has been constantly in society. His knowledge is gained from this source, mine, from books,—so that we may mutually assist each other. His views on religious subjects are, as yet, wild and indefinite ; but he is amiable, full of benevolence towards the human species (though he does not think very well of them), and very desirous of enlisting among the champions of truth, whatever guise it may assume. You must not think me vain, when I tell you, that hitherto my arguments have silenced, if they have not convinced him, and I look forward with confidence to future success."

From this time the intimacy between the two seemed fully established. Heath introduced his friend to his associates ; and when Walter's taste and principles were occasionally shocked by profligacy of language and sentiment, Heath endeavoured to persuade him, that he was wisely engrafting a knowledge of human nature upon his book-learning. It must not be supposed that Walter could hear the cavils of infidelity without pain ; on the contrary, he met them with argument, and felt like a hero who was left alone to encounter the enemy. The habit of disputing on religious subjects is unfavorable to the spirit

of religion, even where parties meet on general and allowed ground; but where the very existence of the Deity becomes a matter of familiar debate; where all that the mind has considered sacred, is treated with scorn and ridicule, it is not strange that veneration should be worn away by controversy. The name of that Being who inhabits eternity, which Walter had been accustomed to repeat with awe, had now become to his ear the pass-word of debate. Neither is it strange, that, surrounded by temptation, his former love of conviviality should influence his opinions. To enjoy, he conceded, was one of the commands of the Deity; enjoyment, with his present associates, was revelry. By degrees the vital influences of piety ceased to operate. Yet still many of his early impressions remained; he had resolutely refused to go to the theatre, without assigning any reasons; when pressed for his objections, they melted away before his inclination. From his youth upward, to read and spout Shakespeare had been his recreation; to see one of those noble plays embodied, — to see "Richard himself," was irresistible. He had objected, because it was not clerical; but he began to think that nothing could be more idle than to refuse himself any enjoyment or amusement, because he was one day by custom to be debarred from it. The very profession he had chosen, became a reason for present self-indulgence; and he framed for himself motives and excuses, that far outstripped the ingenuity of his infidel companions.

On returning home one night, he found his uncle waiting for him. There was an unusual coldness in his manner, and he looked at Heath with less courtesy than usual. "You keep late hours, nephew," said he.

"Is it late, sir?" said Walter, pulling out his watch, (the gift of his uncle,) with an embarrassed air.

"About one," said Captain Brewster. "I don't wish to pry into your concerns; but as your parents entrusted you to my care, and I was the means of your leaving them, I think it is my duty to inquire." His natural delicacy seemed to make him unwilling to proceed.

"I understand you, sir," said Walter, respectfully; "you wish to know where I have passed this evening."

"I do," replied Captain Brewster.

"We have been to a *moral lecture*," said Heath, stepping in to Walter's assistance.

"Has it been upon keeping late hours?" said the captain, with a sarcasm that was wholly new to his nephew.

"My dear uncle," said Walter, seizing his hand with warmth, "I would not deceive you for my right hand. I have been to the theatre, and, after I left it, I spent an hour or two with a small circle of friends."

The tears rolled down the sailor's rugged and weather-beaten cheeks; for, much to his annoyance, whenever he was particularly moved they came unbidden.

Heath lighted a lamp, and left the room.

The uncle and nephew both remained silent, Walter still grasping his hand.

"My dear boy," said Captain Brewster, "I would not have you think that I have had any plan of spying into your way of passing your time this evening. No, I have too much confidence in your good feelings and good principles, as well as your learning; but I came home at nine, and wanted you to do a little writing for me, and as I expected you every minute, I have been waiting for you."

"How tedious it must have been to you!" exclaimed Walter.

"Not at all; you forget that it is a sailor's duty to keep watch, and look well to the star-board and larboard as well as afore and aft. Many 's the time, in a heavy gale of wind and when it was so dark that I could not see my hand before me, that I have kept watch till I was covered with ice, and looked more like a water-spout than a man."

"Well, uncle, let me have the writing," said Walter, cheerfully.

"Not at this time of night; there is a season for all things. Besides, I have a little to say about the play-house."

"The theatre, you mean," said Walter.

"Ay, it don't make much odds what we call it; it is the same thing."

"I never heard you say you disapproved of it," said Walter.

"The reason of that," said the uncle, "is that I don't disapprove of it; that is, I believe it may

sometimes keep people out of mischief as well as lead them into it; but I never heard it particularly recommended for clergymen."

"And yet, sir," said Walter, "if, as one of the most moral writers of his day has said, it is calculated

'To raise the genius and to mend the heart,'

it must be as much calculated for clergymen as any other class of men."

"As for mending the heart," said Captain Brewster, "I have always supposed the Bible was the best place to look for such directions; but what I want to ask you now, is, whether you think your father and mother would approve of your going to the play-house?"

"I think," said Walter, "if my parents" —

"Answer me that question direct, my dear boy; yes or no?"

Thus urged and hemmed in, Walter was compelled to answer, "No."

"Then, according to my notions, by going you disobey them. Now that is all I wanted to say, and to-morrow you shall do my writing. Good night. God love you and keep you."

Walter retired to his room with no very pleasant feelings. He knew that his uncle would be much more dissatisfied with the convivial meeting of the last part of the night, than with the amusement of the first. He was restless and dissatisfied, and might be truly compared to a man who is daily spending upon the capital he has accumulated, and is harassed by the con-

sciousness, that if he goes on he must finally become a bankrupt. He had acquired a taste for amusements inconsistent with his profession ; he was living as if there was nothing higher or better than the present existence. Still, however, his conscience was easily roused, and the truths of religion still held their place in his mind. Not all the scoffs of infidelity, or the demoralizing influence of licentious conversation, could silence the warning voice of Christian admonition. We must become traitors to ourselves, before the downward course is completed. Hitherto, it might be said, Walter was weak rather than sinful ; the leisure which his present situation gave, might have been occupied by high and noble pursuits ; but he had suffered it to be wasted in unprofitable musings and useless reverie. It was the idleness, the sauntering gait, the folded arms, that first marked him out as the prey of Heath, — for the meeting was accidental on his side. There were passages in his life that were dark and suspicious ; it has been said that he *lived by his wits*. Walter's appearance fully indicated his little knowledge of the city ; and the neatness of his dress bespoke the amplitude of his resources. Heath easily ascertained his situation, and the circumstances under which he resided with his uncle ; and he immediately changed his own lodgings for those of Walter, and became his friend and companion.

Wary and cunning as Heath was, he could not wholly elude Walter's investigation. He soon perceived, that the arguments of infidelity could

effect but little upon a mind imbued with religious knowledge. It was necessary to operate upon the weaknesses of his character, — his vanity, his love of amusement, and his perfect confidence in himself. It was of little consequence what he believed, if he could induce him to give the reins to his passions and animal propensities. He knew that he must get rid of religion to practise immorality, and he did not care by what steps the victory was gained. It may appear strange and unnatural, that Heath should devote his time to an object that seemed inadequate to the trouble. But it must be remembered, that he had much unoccupied time, that vice was his vocation, and, above all, that he already lived upon the liberality with which Walter was supplied.

Heath had early made himself acquainted with many circumstances in Walter's situation; the most important to him, was the careless liberality of his uncle, and a natural disregard in the nephew of money so freely bestowed. But there were some subjects on which Walter had never made any communication. One was his attachment to Anna and their future union. He shrunk from the coarse observations which he knew were in accordance with Heath's feelings and opinions, and which would probably follow the communication. Another was his choice of a profession. The fear of ridicule operated on his mind. He allowed Heath to think that books of divinity had been thrown in his way, and that he had read them as a matter of taste. Had



Walter wanted a test by which to try his opinions of his friend, he could not have had a surer one. The purest and highest affections and purposes of his life, were carefully concealed from that friend's knowledge;—and why? Because they had no congeniality with his nature; on one side was darkness, on the other, light.

There is no resting-place for character; it must proceed, or retrograde. Hitherto, Walter's early religious principles had been his safeguard from his weaknesses. But those religious impressions came now to "murder sleep." It was in vain he tried to make some compromise with them. "My son, give me thy heart," is the only compact between man and his Creator. Happy are those, between whose conscience and practice there is no contention.

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## CHAPTER VII.

### THE STRUGGLE WITH SHAME.

"Oh! if there be no world on high,  
To yield his powers unfettered scope  
If man be only born to die,  
Whence this inheritance of hope?"

It is not our intention to define the steps by which Walter gradually lost sight of his early habits and religious duties. His late hours interfered with his devotions; he returned home either in a state of excitement or exhaustion, and they

were postponed to the morning. The mornings became extremely short, and Walter, who used to be up with the rising sun, slept till the breakfast-bell awoke him. He now adopted the opinion, that a short invocation while he was descending the stairs, was as salutary as a regular prayer. Several months of the time that he was to remain in the city had passed, and he sometimes felt impatient that it should terminate. He was quite sure that all his follies would end with his return, and that he only gave in to them to beguile the tediousness of his situation. In the midst of these thoughts he received a letter from Anna.

"We begin to think, dear Walter, that it is a long time since we have heard from you, but I believe we are a little unreasonable; you wrote so often at first, that it led us constantly to expect letters. My father is much the same as when you left us; he has more appetite, but I cannot perceive that he gains strength. He is just as cheerful under this long confinement, as you have seen him in his best days. I often wish you could have the benefit of his conversation at this period of convalescence. His faith and hope are fixed steadfastly upon the future life, and yet he has the highest enjoyment in this. I think you would enjoy his society more than ever, and you might approach a little nearer to each other; for he is more enthusiastic, perhaps I ought to say, more fervent in his expressions, than he used to be. His soul, at times, seems to be so elevated, so raised above

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pain and suffering, that I tremble lest it is about taking flight to a holier region, and I shall be left here alone. Then my thoughts dwell on you, and our fair prospects, and I put on my cloak and hood, and go to visit your parents. You would laugh to see me travelling through the snow, and buffeting the northwest wind; but when I get there, it is so warm and pleasant, and we talk so much of you, that it is well worth the effort. O my dear friend, with such parents and such advantages, we ought to grow like the willow by the water's side. You have been gone more than three months. Your uncle said he should sail in three. How soon you will be back, — but there is *one* that will count the hours."

Such was the substance of Anna's letter. Walter read it, threw it on the table before him, and, yielding to an involuntary burst of tears, leant upon his elbow with his handkerchief to his eyes.

Suddenly Heath entered. "What has happened, my dear fellow," said he, in the most soothing voice, as Walter hastily arose, ashamed of being thus surprised. "Oh, I see," exclaimed he; "a woman's handwriting! what, is it a love-letter, filled with reproaches and petitions?"

"You are mistaken, sir," said Walter, coldly.

"I am glad of it; there could not be a greater folly than for a man to form any engagement that he cannot shake off as he would an old garment. Any of a matrimonial nature would condemn you to poverty and obscurity."

"Perhaps not," said Walter, a little proudly; "if I choose to marry to-morrow, I have the offer of a parish."

"By all means accept it, and let me be deacon. You would make a fine speaker on the right side of the question, and with defensible ground. But I am in a hurry now, and only called for you to go to Warner's this evening."

"It will not be in my power," said Walter, involuntarily glancing his eye at the letter.

"But, my dear fellow, you have positively engaged; you are too conscientious to break your word."

"I am engaged otherwise," said Walter, "and it can injure no one whether I stay or go."

"Yes, it will injure poor Warner; he has provided supper for ten, and it will be a loss of five dollars to him; — five dollars a head was the agreement."

"If that is the case," said Walter, "I will give you the sum; but I cannot go myself;" and he put the bill into his hand.

"You are a fine-spirited fellow," said Heath. "Well, good evening, we will drink the health of Parson Smith in sparkling champagne."

"Stay," exclaimed Walter, "I must request that neither here, nor there, nor anywhere else, you will call me *Parson* Smith. I am not a parson yet, and perhaps I never shall be; I told you in confidence, that the offer of a parish was made to me."

"Right," said Heath; "I am glad you cautioned me, for I should have been sorry to have

had such a clever fellow the laughing-stock of the company ;” and he hastened away to amuse his companions with the scene, and what he called “the dying agonies of Walter’s conscience.”

After his departure Walter felt at first a gleam of satisfaction ; but conscience was faithful to its duty. He in vain repeated to himself, that he did nothing but what others did in the season of youth ; that he committed no crimes, and, though surrounded by infidels, that he still kept his own faith. An inward voice seemed to warn him, that he stood on the brink of ruin. He attempted to pray, but his thoughts were wild and wandering ; he looked for his Bible, but he had lent it to his uncle the week before. He seized his pen to answer Anna’s letter. There is a holy influence in virtuous affection. As he wrote, better thoughts and resolutions came over him ; the sentiment of religion was again roused. His letter was filled with expressions of devoted affection, of unchanging tenderness. He told her, she was his guardian angel, his shield against evil. When Anna received the letter, it communicated no happiness to her heart. She perceived that there was a common-place and exaggerated strain of thought and expression running through it, and, as she folded it up, there was so much sadness in her countenance, that her father observed it, and tenderly inquired, — “Is all well with Walter ?” The words died on her lips as she attempted to reply in the language of the Shunamite woman, “All is well,”


and she simply observed, — "He says nothing of his health."

His letters to his parents were satisfactory to them. He expressed his filial duty in natural terms; said that he hoped he was useful to his uncle, who was kindness itself. They had not the discrimination which Anna possessed, nor were their faculties sharpened by an affection peculiar to woman;

"Love round her heart a subtler feeling throws,  
Still trembling most, where most her hopes repose."

Captain Brewster, like a true sailor, valued money as a means, and was injudiciously liberal to his nephew. How many offices has true affection to perform besides that of indulgence! How much of watchfulness is requisite; how much of warning and denial! George meant to be the best of uncles; but, alas, he was helping his nephew on his downward path.

For a whole week after the reception of Anna's letter, Walter steadily refused to join the convivial parties to which he was urged. Something like renovation seemed to have taken place in his mind, and Heath was so coldly received when he came, that he kept out of his way. The next Saturday evening, however, he called to see him. "Walter," said he, "I am going to give you a proof of my disinterestedness. Warner, who is the cleverest fellow that ever kept a tavern, has been so economical with our funds, that he has provided another supper for us to-night with only an additional dollar a head. Now you know it is all voluntary, my coming to



## THE BACKSLIDER.

tell you ; I might have drank your part of the champagne, to say nothing of the whiskey-punch, all myself."

"You are very kind," said Walter, "but I cannot go to-night."

"O, you have received another letter," said Heath, with a sneer.

"No, I have not, but it is Saturday night."

"Saturday night, is it? How fast the weeks come round. Well, and what of Saturday night?"

"Nothing," said Walter, "only I have letters to write."

"Put it off till to-morrow morning ; Sunday is the very day, because you can do nothing else."

"No," said Walter ; "I cannot go this evening."

"I am sorry," replied Heath, "because we are to-night to have a sort of debating society. Brown is coming forward with proofs that there is no future state ; and I, for the sake of argument, am to take the opposite side of the question ; but he will have a great advantage over me, because it is difficult to support a question we don't believe. Now if you had been going, I should have proposed you for the champion instead of me, and it would have been a fine occasion to show off."

"If I thought," said Walter, "that I should have a fair hearing" —

"I pledge my honor that you shall," said Heath.

## THE STRUGGLE WITH SHAME.

"I have formerly thrown together some thoughts on the subject, and if" —

"Just the thing!" exclaimed Heath; "it is what I should have done myself, if I had had time."

"I have them in my writing-desk," said Walter, going towards it.

"Make haste and get them, we shall be late."

Walter took the roll, and arm in arm with Heath, went to the rendezvous.

The next morning Captain Brewster ate his breakfast, and as usual prepared for church. His nephew had hitherto accompanied him in the morning, and he went to see what delayed him. He found Walter with his face flushed and every indication of fever, and learned that he had been sick all night. His uncle was truly alarmed, and insisted on sending for a physician; but this Walter declined, saying it was sleep that he wanted. Captain Brewster was loth to leave him; but Walter assured him that sleep was all he required, and that the presence of any one would keep him awake. His uncle, after closing his shutters, left him.

Several days of illness followed the bacchanalian excess of the evening. Walter was confined to his room, and again his reviving conscience struggled for the mastery. He had now been with his uncle more than five months, and at the close of the sixth, Captain Brewster was ready for sailing. For a few days previous, Walter was much engaged in writing for him. When he embarked, he gave him a sum of money



for his services, and to furnish him tools to work with, which, he said, he took to be books. He then gave him a check on a bank for the three thousand dollars, in case he should be married,— at the same time stating, that his parents were to have any proportion of it they might need, whenever they should call for it. He advised him to return immediately home; for, said he, “When I am gone, there will be nobody to keep you out of harm’s way.”

There was nothing to prevent Walter’s returning; but it was not easy to break off his present connexions. He had now no longings for the home of his youth; the cheerful fireside of his father had lost its attractions. Mr. Hope, he supposed, was more prosing than ever; and though he still thought of Anna, “as made of every creature’s best,” yet he shrunk from her investigation. He concluded, that, as he had the means of support, he might as well remain in the city; and he wrote to his parents that his uncle had left affairs for him to transact, which would occupy him some time longer. He had become too much accustomed to evasion and shuffling to feel compunction at a falsehood “that hurt nobody.”

It is not necessary to pursue further the downward progress of vice. We have seen how the want of employment, the neglect of habitual watchfulness, and the inordinate love of pleasure, were undermining virtue and happiness; and we must now leave the backslider in his retrograde course, and return to the peaceful village where he was

reared; where all was yet prosperous and serene; and where his confiding parents still thought of their son, as the pride and blessing of their advancing years.

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## CHAPTER VIII.

## TRIALS OF HEART.

*"My hour is come. But no unthought of hour,  
Whose gloomy presence chills the soul with dread;  
It steals as gently o'er my weary heart,  
As the fond parent's footsteps round the couch  
Where infant beauty sleeps."*

WEEKS passed away, and Walter did not arrive. Still Mr. and Mrs. Smith felt no want of confidence in their son. He wrote sufficiently often to prevent their having any anxiety on account of his health, and he was always greatly occupied. They, too, were much engaged; the spring was coming on, and they had no idle moments to spend in imaginary evils. Robert had his farming utensils to get in order, his seeds to assort, and his grain and potatoes to select for planting. Susan, too, was busy in preparing a large store of sheets, pillow-cases, and towels for a wedding present to her son.

In this little circle, Anna was the only sorrowful one. She had watched her father's tottering step and feeble voice, and the deathly paleness of his countenance, till she could no longer de-

ceive herself. She had looked forward to the spring as a restorer ; but the trees put forth their leaves, and the singing of the birds returned, yet no reviving influences came with them. His nights were restless, and his slumbers unrefreshing ; no watchfulness could counteract the effects of the east winds, no patience and no soothing wholly prevent the irritability of the wasting frame, which helped on the disease. It was a trying season for Anna. She stood alone, the comforter, the solace, the nurse of her father. He who had watched by the sick and the dying, who had spoken words of comfort to the departing soul, was now called himself to enter the dark valley of death, with his feeble, gentle child alone to support him. And was she alone ? O no ; a faith, stronger than death, supported both. " My child," said he, " the time is rapidly approaching when our religious faith is to be tested. The infidel may close his eyes with composure in that sleep which he believes eternal ; the philosopher submits to stern necessity without repining ; but the Christian alone can quit cheerfully what is dearest to him. It is hard to leave you, my beloved one ; but, were I living, there are few of the evils of life, from which I could guard you, and I cheerfully commit you to the care of your heavenly Father. I feel that the effort is much greater for you, than for myself ; but do not be discouraged ; hold fast your faith, and your weakness will be made strong. I have thought we ought to let our dear Walter know of my situation. I have the love of a father

towards him. Have you written to him lately?"

"Not very," replied Anna; "he seems to be much occupied."

"Do, then, write to him, and tell him to come and receive my parting blessing."

Anna wrote accordingly, urging his immediate return. She waited for his coming with impatient eagerness; she remembered what an excellent aid he had been to her when her father was first attacked, and her affection for him returned with redoubled force. Days passed, and he came not. Mr. Smith received a letter from him, making no allusions to the one he had received, and enclosing one for Anna, in which he expressed his hopes that her father was on the recovery! When Mr. Hope understood he had not received Anna's letter, he said, — "It would have been a gratification to me to have seen him, — but the will of God be done."

The last day drew nigh. Robert offered to watch with him at night, but Mr. Hope said, as it was the last night he should spend on this side eternity, he had much to say to Anna. She remained with him, and Mr. Smith slept in an adjoining chamber. Much conversation passed between the father and daughter. He talked cheerfully of the certainty of a future state, and the home to which he was going. Anna often thought, "To-morrow he will know all!" And before the morning dawned, he fell asleep, and awoke no more.

When it was known that he was gone, many

said, "It will kill poor Anna, she doated so on her father." Some went to the house, and came away convinced that she was in a stupor. They said she did not shed a tear, and did not seem to notice any thing that was passing. "I asked her," said Mrs. Kent, who was a distant relation, "whether she would have her bonnet made of bombasin or crape, and, would you believe it? she said she did not care which. She really seemed to be indifferent, whether she had on any mourning at all. I think, for my part, we ought to consult propriety when a friend dies; I am sure when my poor husband died, though I had not ten dollars in the world, I put all my family into deep mourning; even the baby had black bows on her cap."

"I remember that, to my cost," said a shopkeeper aside, "for the crape and bombasin are not paid for yet."

Anna was passive under the arrangements of her friends, and on the third day the remains of the clergyman were consigned to the silent earth, and the bereaved daughter returned from the grave to her solitary home.

To the mind of the Christian, there is a peculiar trust in the hour of affliction. The world retreats from our view, and God and heaven open upon it, and the assurance of a future life is full of consolation. Turn which way we will, all is wretchedness short of this conviction; nothing will satisfy us, but the confidence, that they whom we have lost, will live again to us; that they are only transported to another prov-

ince under God's government, where we shall rejoin them. In the hour of bereavement this conviction comes to the soul with peculiar strength, and, like other lessons of Providence, is precisely fitted to its wants. In that hour, too, all is favorable to this state of mind ; stillness reigns around ; every one moves with a slow and gentle step, as if the hurry and business of life were passed ; the world seems to stand still, and we are left to the communion of our own thoughts. Faith grows in the solitude and silence. Every one who feels deeply must realize, that it is not in its first moments, that affliction is hardest to be borne, for then God speaks to us, and we hear his voice alone ; but when the world comes with its commonplace sympathies, and mingles its formal axioms with its heartless requirements, then, too, comes the bitterness of grief.

Anna had passed through the first period alluded to, and was entering on the second. She had met affliction with the high hopes and the unfainting strength of a Christian. She was now called to active duties, and she did not shrink from them. Her father left no property, and in a short time the parsonage, the happy home of her youth, must be relinquished. Still nothing was neglected ; the little garden had its choice flowers, every shrub was trained with care, and the summer-house covered with luxuriant vines ; yet how sadly to her the scene was changed !

She had taken her usual seat one evening, in her little parlour ; her mind was filled with high and holy contemplation, when the door opened

and Walter entered. After the first emotion of meeting was over, Anna again became calm and self-possessed. "You have arrived too late," said she, "to receive my father's blessing; but he left it in charge for me. I shall have much to say to you when I am better able."

"I little thought," said Walter, "when we parted that the separation would have been so long. Why did you not write me that your father was so low?"

"I did," said Anna, fixing her eyes steadfastly upon him. Walter imagined there was suspicion in her look; but he was mistaken; that he had practised deception, never occurred to her mind.

There was, on his side, evident embarrassment; on hers, without meaning it, the air of waiting for and expecting an explanation of his prolonged absence and remissness in writing. After a long pause he said, "To-morrow morning I will come and tell you every thing; in the mean time, give me the assurance that your affection for me is not changed."

'This Anna could most sincerely do; he was now all of earthly happiness she clung to, and his weal and woe were nearest to her heart.

The visit was by no means satisfactory to her. They had met, and her father's death had been slightly alluded to; not a word of religious sympathy or consolation had fallen from his lips. But she saw that he still loved her, and he had spoken as if he relied on their former engagement; this could not but diffuse a ray of brightness over the future;—there was still one to

cherish her, — one, who understood and appreciated her; she was not a solitary being on the face of the earth. She looked round on every object, on her father's books, his writing-desk, his chair, and thought, "Though another will soon take his place, the spirit will still be there." The hope that this other might be Walter, caused dreams of earthly happiness, for the first time since her father's death, to mingle with her slumbers.

Walter came the next morning. His short interview with Anna had roused his dormant affection. She had formerly fallen short of his notions of ideal beauty; but since he had seen more of reality, she came nearer to it. He was convinced that Heath and his other companions would think her a pretty girl, and a little of his former enthusiasm returned. In a short time, however, he again appeared abstracted and silent, and their conversation became forced and formal.

"Your absence has been greatly prolonged," said Anna; "it is eight months since we parted."

"It seems to me eight years," exclaimed Walter.

"How much you must have seen and learned in all that time."

"Yes," replied he, involuntarily; "a great deal, Anna, that you never dreamt or heard of."

"How is your friend Heath?"

"O well, perfectly well."

"Did you succeed," asked she, "in making him a convert to your opinions?"

"We think much more alike than we did at first."



"Do you find me altered any, Anna?" said Walter, after a pause.

"I think you are paler, much paler, and thinner than when you went away; the air of the city has robbed you of your fresh color."

"The air of the city robs every thing of its freshness," said Walter. "But you look better, Anna."

"It is strange that I should."

"No, not at all; your life is so tranquil and regular, your mind always at peace with itself; *you* have nothing to make you unhappy."

"Oh, Walter," exclaimed Anna, unable to repress her tears; "is it nothing to lose such a father?"

"Certainly," he replied; "he was one of the best of men; but then you know we cannot live always; one must die first, and it was in the common course of nature that he should precede you."

"I sometimes think," said Anna, looking round, "that he is still with me. Do you think there is any thing unnatural in this supposition?"

"I think it is a very harmless one for you," said Walter.

"But why is it not a rational one," said Anna, losing in her interest the formality that had oppressed her; "there is no tie broken between us. Can my father love me less, because he has relinquished the only obstruction to the highest and most exalted affection? Many times have I read over this sentence, and always with new comfort:—'The world of spirits,—we know

not where it is, whether far or near; but it may as well, for all that we can understand, be near to us as far distant; and in that fervent love which knows nothing of change, or distance, or distinction, it is for ever near us. Our friend, if he be the same and not another being, our friend, in whatever world, in whatever sphere, is still our friend. The ties of every virtuous union are like the virtue which cements them, like the affection of angels, like the love of God which binds them to the eternal throne,—immortal.’”

“If we can convince ourselves that we live again,” said Walter, “I see no objection to believing that, as well as any other thing.”

“Thank Heaven there is no effort of imagination required to do that,” said Anna, fervently; “the evidences of a future existence are as manifold as the attributes of God.”

“We seem to have changed characters, Anna,” said Walter, with some indication of feeling; “*you* are the enthusiast now.”

“If you call fervent conviction, enthusiasm,” said Anna, “I hope both of us are enthusiasts.”

“I call conviction or belief, enthusiasm, which has no argument to sustain it.”

Anna looked earnestly at him. “I do not see,” said she, “how you mean to apply your observation. I am sure *you* have no doubts on this subject.”

“I suppose I should shock you, Anna, if I say that I have.”

She was silent for some moments and then

said, "No, Walter, it is natural for the mind to inquire and investigate. You had but little opportunity before you left here; it is right that you should exercise more fully the powers of your own reason. Perhaps your friend Heath has excited some doubts in your mind by his arguments."

"You suppose I must be always led by some one, I perceive," said Walter, with excitement; "but I tell you truly, that Heath has nothing to do with my present views. Of one thing you may be assured, that, however I may be altered in appearance, my feelings towards you are still the same."

"I believe it, Walter," said Anna, "and it is this sweet thought that gives life a charm; it has cheered many a night of watchfulness, and it diffused fortitude and resolution when I knelt by the death-bed of my father; thankfulness mingled with my prayer for Christian resignation. And yet it was natural that your silence and long absence should have given me uneasiness. Your letters at first were a great source of pleasure to me, and I wanted to know more about your new friend; did he improve upon acquaintance?"

"Why do you still keep talking of Heath?" said Walter; "have you heard any thing of him?"

"Only from you," said Anna.

"I don't remember what I wrote," replied Walter; "but it seems to have made a wonderfully strong impression."

"You spoke of his unsettled opinions about religion," said Anna.

"Then I did very wrong," said Walter, with a sneering laugh; "for they are perfectly settled. I suppose you were afraid the naughty boy would lead me into mischief. But don't let us talk about Heath; tell me about your father."

Uncomfortably as the course of the conversation had caused Anna to feel, she was glad to escape from it, however abruptly, and began immediately to relate the interesting circumstances of her father's last illness and decay. "In his last conversation," she said, "he gave me a little sketch of his early life. He said, that when he was at college, he met with a number of books written with ingenuity and wit, which produced a great degree of skepticism in his mind; that religion was a subject upon which he had not previously bestowed much thought, but had taken upon trust what his parents believed. Of course his faith was an edifice composed of slight materials, and the first shock brought it to the ground. He spoke much of the misery of that period, of the cold apathy and indifference that he felt to every thing around him. The tie between himself and his fellow-creatures seemed destroyed. He could compare his state to nothing but a wreck of intellect, yet with the consciousness that it was gone. I asked him what dispelled this horrible cloud. He told me that it was the operation of his own mind; that he determined to think and search for himself. In the first place, he became con-

vinced that there were more difficulties in the creed of the skeptic than of the believer, and he felt the want of a God so powerfully, that it brought a conviction to his mind that there was one."

"Anna," said Walter, impatiently interrupting her, "why all this preamble? Come to the point at once, and I will meet you on equal ground. If you have any thing you wish to say upon my change of opinions, say it directly, and do not make the old gentleman a medium of admonition or reproach."

Anna looked at him in silence, for a few moments; she believed a fit of insanity had seized him. At length she said, "I don't know what you mean, nor to what change of opinions you allude."

"I presume," said Walter, "this conversation, if it ever took place, is introduced to develop my opinions. I will save you all further trouble by declaring them at once.—I no longer believe in the Christian religion."

Anna looked like a marble statue, more than a thing of life; the color forsook her cheeks and lips. At length she said in a low voice, "You are then a deist?"

"Not in the sense you mean," he replied. "In my view nature is God; I know no other. I am sorry to shock your prejudices, so abruptly too, but you have forced it from me. I never shall wish to control your opinions; it is one of our first principles to leave every one to investigate for himself; the most I shall do,"

he continued, gaining confidence as he proceeded, "will be to endeavour to knock off the shackles which have hitherto trammelled your mind, — which is really of a high order. I had fully determined to relinquish the idea of becoming a public speaker ; but last evening a committee from the society waited on me, and requested me to occupy the pulpit. It occurred to me there could be no better or fairer opportunity to urge the principles of free inquiry, and I assented.

"Did you tell them of the change in your opinions?"

"Certainly not ; I know too well their prejudices, and that it would deprive me of the opportunity of aiding the cause of general philanthropy. I wish to teach them that virtue is lovely for its own sake, without the selfish prospect of future reward or punishment, and that there is no virtue in sacrificing enjoyment. I have not mentioned my change of opinions to the old folks at home."

"If you mean your parents," said Anna, "may God in his mercy preserve them from knowing it. It will break their hearts."

"My dear Anna," said Walter, "if I did not see that you take this so seriously, I should be amused at your consternation ; — as if difference of opinion were of any consequence !. Whether I believe in a God, or do not believe in one, does not change my identity ; it is still my earnest wish to connect my life with yours. I believe our attachment is strong enough to bear the

paralyzing effect of legal shackles, though there is no doubt but, in common cases,

‘Love, free as air, at sight of human ties,  
Spreads his light wings, and in a moment flies.’”

“Have you said all you wish to say?” said Anna.

“Not quite,” replied he, with a smile that once thrilled to her heart,—for he had now talked himself into a perfectly easy state of feeling, and in the warmth of his self-complacency was entirely unsuspecting of the impression he was making;—“Not quite; my uncle has left me with an order for a sum that I may claim on our marriage; if I remain here, we can probably retain this place, and we will make it as beautiful as any of the fabled descriptions of Paradise; or, if you prefer it, we will go to the city to reside. Tell me frankly what you wish.”

It was several minutes before Anna seemed able to speak. She then said, “Walter, you cannot be serious; eight months cannot have wrought such a change in your opinions. O no, you have doubts,—many a good man has had them before you, and has made investigation with a humble and patient mind, and become at last a fervent Christian. We will kneel together at the throne of mercy, we will pray that our minds may be enlightened, and God will hear our prayer.”

“If you reflect for a moment, Anna, you will perceive that it would be the extreme of folly for me to address a Being that I do not believe to exist;—but let us set this subject aside, and talk

only of that on which we both agree, — our mutual affection and future plans. Tell me frankly what you wish."

She pressed her hands on her forehead, on her heart, looked round the room, — it was her father's study, — "Not here," she exclaimed; "not here; let us go into the garden, the air is oppressive."

They proceeded to the little summer-house. Anna seemed to breathe more freely; the color returned to her cheeks. Her lips did not move, but Walter had too often joined in her devotions not to understand the nature of her silence.

After a few minutes she said, "It is just a year to-morrow since we sat on this spot; see, I have marked it;" she raised the vine leaves, and the date was there. "Then you felt assured that your own mind would discover the existence of a God by his works. Do you recollect that morning?"

"Perfectly; I recollect that, and a thousand other boyish ebullitions. I remember too you told me that you trembled for me; and I am convinced it was because your excellent sense realized the unsoundness of your opinions."

"Would to God," exclaimed Anna, clasping her hands, "that my fears had been less true!"

"Why do you call on a God," said Walter, "since even what you consider my apostasy gives sufficient proof that he has no power to grant your prayers."

"Alas," said Anna, "I have not the presumption or folly to ask him to compel you in spite



of your own resistance to seek him. He furnishes the sunshine, the rain, and the seed, and he leaves it to us to secure the harvest. O Walter, do not break the only tie that binds me to life! Think how long I have loved you, — years before you suspected it, — while I was yet a child. You have accused me of coldness, of want of sensibility. You little know the strength of my affections. I would humble myself to the dust; I would be the veriest menial that walks the earth, to restore to you the faith you have renounced."

"My dear Anna," said Walter, moved at a vehemence in her so unusual, "you are actually bewildering yourself. Why do you talk of my 'breaking the tie' which unites us? So far from it, it is the earnest wish of my heart to devote my whole life to you. I will promise to put no shackles on your opinion; you may worship what Deity you please; only suffer me to exclaim with Eve, —

'God thy law, thou mine.'

It is the seclusion and solitude in which you have been educated, that lead you to give this importance to opinion. A few months' intercourse with the world will wear off this sensitiveness. But you are not well," he added, observing that she looked very pale.

"I am sick at heart," she exclaimed; "leave me now; to-morrow I will see you again."

Walter returned home. It is needless to say with what delight the fond parents gazed upon their son; and yet the anxious mother thought,

as Anna did, that Walter was paler and thinner; and, when she heard him slightly cough through the night, she fancied there was something consumptive in the sound. Once, as her eyes were fixed on him they filled with tears, and she earnestly inquired if he was not well.

"Very well, mother," he replied; "why do you ask that question?"

"I hardly know why," she said; "but you are altered."

"You must not expect, wife," said Robert, "that Walter is always to look like a boy. I suppose you are thinking now of the little curly-headed, rosy-cheeked fellow, that used to nestle in your lap till he was so big you were both ashamed of it."

"That is the mother's happiest season!" exclaimed Susan.

"You forget," said Robert, "that you said the first time Walter preached in Mr. Hope's pulpit was the happiest day of your life."

"True," replied Susan, smiling through her tears, "and now that I see him after so long an absence, I think *this* is the happiest period of my life."

Many a kind neighbour called to congratulate them on Walter's return, and some observed that "he had studied away his flesh."

And what were Walter's sensations, when he retired to his own room, and communed with himself? There all was anarchy. He had left debts in the city, that must be paid from the marriage portion presented by his uncle. He

was conscious that if his parents knew how the last months had been passed, the knowledge would strike a dagger to their hearts. There was little peace in the thought.

The next morning he went to see Anna. He found that she had recovered much of her self-possession, though she still looked pale and sorrowful. "I have come," said he, "to know your decision."

"Let me first ask you," said Anna, "whether our conversation of yesterday is a dream, or whether it is indeed a reality."

"If your question relates to my change of opinion," said Walter, "it is useless to discuss all that again. You must feel that it is not in my power to believe because you require it."

"Walter," said Anna, "I will make no further inquiries. Henceforth we are as separate as if we lived in different elements. You have severed the tie between us. I should prefer any life of hardship and toil, to connecting myself with one, with whom my mind can have no communion. Had you suffered poverty, or sickness, or undergone reproach; had you returned maimed, or blind, how gladly, were those the only obstacles, would I have devoted my life to your comfort. But now it is over. I am poor and alone; but I am not cast down. He in whom I trust, will be my guide and support. One thing I am called upon to say. You have intimated that you are willing to enter the pulpit without previously making known your change of sentiment; as a worshipper of God, as a disciple of Christ,

this I must protest against. You must either make known your opinions, or relinquish your purpose."

"And if I do not," said Walter, with assumed indifference, "pray what is the penalty?"

"I must inform them; but do not force me to such a painful measure. I am not too happy now; do not make me more miserable."

"You are acting under false impressions, and deceiving yourself. I make you miserable! My very religion is enjoyment; it is the only religion of nature; all that opposes it is fictitious and false. However, you may make yourself perfectly easy; my only motive in remaining here would have been, that it was your wish; and now, notwithstanding your bigotry and unkindness, I could almost be tempted to believe for the sake of obtaining you."

Anna cast at him a look of scorn and indignation; but such emotions were, with her, momentary. "O Walter," said she, "do not return to the city. Remain here at least a few months; resume your former pursuits; be the son you once were to your parents."

"Impossible!" exclaimed Walter. "What, lead the useless life of a monk, brushing the dust from musty books! or tilling the earth! No, no, Anna; I return to-morrow."

"Farewell, then," said she; "we meet no more as we have done. One thing let me add, for it is our last communication on this subject; if ever the time arrives when your heart is touched by divine grace, should the world forsake you,

and you be left deserted and scorned, then, if you wish for me, send and I will come."

She rose to leave him. "I would ask one question," said Walter; "is it merely for difference of opinion that you renounce me?"

"It is reason enugh," replied she, "that henceforth we can have no communion of thought and feeling. But I have taxed my strength to the uttermost."

Still Walter detained her. "If this is your final resolution," said he, "I shall quit this place and return to the city the day after tomorrow; but I still hope that you will change your determination."

"Do not detain me," she exclaimed. The increasing paleness of her countenance alarmed him, and hastily calling her domestic, he left her.

It might be doubted whether he felt most of regret or of relief from this conversation. The prospect of an explanation had been embarrassing to him; and, upon the whole, he was disposed to acquiesce in Anna's determination.

As for Anna, for the first time her trials seemed almost beyond her strength; she could say most truly with the Psalmist, — "Lover and friend hast thou put far from me, and mine acquaintance into darkness." She confined herself to her room, and refused to see any one; but, after a few days, her fortitude began to return. There is often a constitutional enthusiasm, which produces temporary disregard of outward circumstances; but this did not form a part of her character. She firmly believed that divine as-

assistance was communicated under heavy trials, and that it coöperated with the sincere efforts of the true believer; but she knew nothing of the raptures or ecstatic emotions that visit the enthusiast. Religion operated upon her mind through the faculties bestowed upon it, not changing but perfecting them. Before she could return to the habitual duties of life with calmness and a determined purpose, she had many Christian virtues to bring into exercise. First, there was faith;—she had thought of God as a Father, she was now called to submit with the obedience of a child to his dispensations. Another exercise of Christian virtue was to purify an attachment which had been connected with all her prospects of earthly happiness. It would have been easier to banish Walter wholly from her mind, than to bear him upon it under such restrictions as she now considered a duty. She was not to try to forget him, but to remember him in her daily petitions, and to feel that the whole of that affection, which had grown with her growth, was only to be preserved for religious and moral discipline.

“Here, then,” thought she, “I have, as it were, a new life to begin. I must not say I have nothing now to live for; one act of the drama is over, but another opens before me. Hitherto it has been my happy lot to receive instruction under the most benign forms. Now I am to be led by the severer teachings of Providence. I have no worldly dependence but my own resources; I am, therefore, called upon for activity

and usefulness. It must be my earnest endeavour to communicate good, and give back to society some of the benefits which I have received,—not, as heretofore, by merely cultivating amiable and kind affections, but by bearing a part in the severe duties of life, by sharing its toils, and bearing its disappointments and mortifications.”

Such were the principles which Anna deduced from her religious faith; it now remained for her to put them in operation. She did not delude herself, as many a heart-broken woman has done before and after her, with the idea that her example could work miracles. She viewed Walter's case as more desperate than that of the thoughtless offender who has never been instructed in the great truths of religion through the gospel of Christ. Though she fully believed that hitherto his opinions, not his practice, had yielded to temptation, yet she saw clearly that the sensitiveness of virtue was gone; there was a bluntness, almost a coarseness, in his professions of attachment, from which she shrunk. He had asserted that his religion was enjoyment, and that virtue was only to be practised for the promotion of this end. Her clear and dispassionate mind easily foresaw in what such opinions must end; and, uninstructed as she was in the gradations of vice, she knew that when virtue and enjoyment came in opposition, the former must yield to the latter.

“Henceforth,” she again repeated to herself, “I must not indulge a hope that we shall ever be

united. I must pursue my path as if Walter did not exist. I must view him only as belonging to the great family of mankind. I must no longer think of him as the friend in whom I have trusted for counsel and protection."

But though she was perfectly sincere in her resolution of thinking no more of Walter as connected with herself, she yet had a lingering hope that he would not return to the city, and that the influence of early habits and a religious education might gradually operate upon his heart and mind. It was, therefore, with a new pang she learnt that he had actually gone. He had left the village without any exposition of his sentiments, and merely informed his parents that he had changed his intention of becoming a clergyman. Though this was a serious disappointment to them, they did not feel any right to control his inclination. In his change of purpose they discovered no dereliction of principle, and they parted from him with a perfect reliance upon his good conduct, and an overweening pride in his talents and gentlemanly deportment. He informed them, that his uncle had given him a check for the whole sum he had deposited in the bank, and that any part of it was to be at their service. Robert replied that he had no wish to increase the size of his farm, and trusted, as he had his own savings untouched, he should not be obliged to make use of his brother's proffered kindness. Walter then said, that he presumed it could not be foreign to the spirit of his uncle's intention if he



withdrew a small sum to begin business with. To this Robert made no objection.

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## CHAPTER IX.

### NURSE HOPE.

"To be really industrious, we must look on a day as we do on a trunk when we are filling it, and persuade ourselves, that, even when it appears to be full, it will hold a little more by good management."

It is a difficult task, after the sensibility has been unusually excited, to come down to the every-day affairs of life. Anna was aware that since her father's death, she had remained at the parsonage only through the kindness of his friends. It wanted repairs, and it was therefore proper to quit it immediately.

Mr. and Mrs. Smith earnestly requested Anna to reside with them; but she considered it an unnecessary trial of her fortitude, and she positively declined this arrangement. What was the most judicious way of supporting herself, remained yet undecided. The school which was opened by Walter, had at that time included all the children of the village. It had since been divided, and the girls separated from the boys. To the superintendence of this department her wishes turned; but it was already under the direction of a young woman who had qualified herself for the office, and she felt that it would

be ungenerous to interfere. There was but one department in the village which was unoccupied, — that of a nurse for the sick. Anna had felt this want during her father's long illness. There were some who were willing to be nurses, when they were out of other work, but who were ignorant and unfeeling. Here, then, was an opportunity for her not only to obtain a subsistence, but to do good to others. On the other hand, there was much to contend with; she was refined in her feelings, and shrunk from the contemplation of bodily pain. This office, too, was considered a menial one; but then, again, there was nobody but herself to consult, there were no brothers or sisters to blush and be confounded when they heard her called *Nurse Hope*; and as to the office being a menial one, she was sure it gave scope to some of the noblest and most active powers of the human mind. It was after mature deliberation, that she announced her intention of becoming a village nurse, and requested the employment of those who might want a person in that capacity.

All expressed astonishment; some, disapprobation; but Mrs. Kent, the distant relation, thought herself bound in duty to remonstrate. She was a cleaner and repairer of straw bonnets; and, putting on a very nice specimen of her business, trimmed with a broad black ribbon, she went to make a visit of condolence apparently, but in reality one of curiosity. "I thought," said she, "as I was the only relation you had, you might like to consult me about your affairs."

"I thank you," replied Anna, "but they are all arranged."

"I heard a report that you were going out a nursing, but I did not believe it."

"It is true," replied Anna; "it was necessary for me to earn a living, and this appeared to me the way in which I could be most useful."

"Well," replied Mrs. Kent, "you always were a thoughtful child, but you wanted advice after your poor father died. There are many respectable ways of earning a living, and there is no need of your degrading yourself. I will put about a subscription, and we will get a nice little sum to set you up as a milliner, and then I can give you *employ* myself; you shall line and trim my bonnets."

"I thank you," replied Anna, meekly, "but I have had several offers of the kind without a subscription. Deacon Harman offered to set me up himself, but I declined."

"There you did right; it would not be creditable for such a young thing as you are to set up by herself; but under me nothing could be said against it."

"I have no faculty for millinery," replied Anna, "and must wholly decline your offer."

"Why don't you open a school?" asked the persevering woman.

Anna gave her reasons. "Now that is all nonsense," cried Mrs. Kent; "I say, let every body take care of themselves, and the world will be well taken care of."

"Then you would have no objection to my

putting out a sign like yours, for 'repairing and cleaning straw bonnets'?"

"Have you any thoughts of it?" said Mrs. Kent, looking alarmed.

"I should prefer it to *lining* hats and bonnets, and, as my father had so many friends, they would employ me for his sake."

"I think it would be very unhandsome to take my children's bread out of their mouths, and I your father's relation."

"I thought you recommended to every body to take care of themselves."

"Well," said Mrs. Kent, rising, "all I can say is, if you choose to degrade yourself, I shall have nothing to do with it;" and she hurried away to tell every body, she "always thought Anna Hope was a little cracked, when she used to see her picking up stones; and, would you believe it? she gave my Mary a beautiful muslin cape, for an odd, out-of-the-way shell, that was no better than a clam shell; and then, again, there 's her books of old dry flowers, that she makes such a fuss about. Her father was always humoring her, and he let her have a beautiful case made to put them in. Now I think of it, it will be just the thing for my ribbons, and I 'll go back and make her an offer for it."

Anna was surprised to see her return so soon. "I have understood," said Mrs. Kent, as soon as she recovered her breath, "that you were going to sell off every thing. Now if you have a mind to let me have what you call your cabinet, in which you keep your stones, I will give you what it is worth."

"I have parted with it already."

"I am sorry; because it would have been worth more to me than any body else; — what did you get for it?"

"I was offered forty dollars for it, and I thought it my duty to let it go."

"Forty dollars!" exclaimed Mrs. Kent.

"Yes," said Anna, "it was very valuable and worth that."

"Why, you are out of your head; it was nothing but a wooden case, was it?"

"No," replied Anna.

"And what did you do with the trumpery?"

"What trumpery?"

"Why the stones and shells that were in it."

"Oh," replied Anna, the first smile coming over her face for many weeks, "they took the trumpery with the case."

The fact was, a gentleman who had seen her collection wrote to her, that if she was going to part with it, he would take it.

Mrs. Kent, for several days, hardly ceased repeating "Forty dollars for a paltry wooden case!"

Poor Anna had not maturely considered the details of her new occupation. There were offices to be performed which it required all her resolution to go through. She found the labor of washing for the sick was expected to be included; to this, neither her strength nor health was equal; but her manner was so kind, she was so watchful and judicious, so unlike any thing before known in this department, that she

found no difficulty in arranging this matter, by relinquishing a small part of her price. The physician lived out of the village, and was sometimes absent when sent for, which left an anxious interval of several hours; the mental influence that Anna had at such times was duly appreciated. We all know *when* we are comforted. Those who could not comprehend her power of mind, felt its support. How much may be done in the hour of sickness! It is not merely smoothing the bed, or wetting the parched lips of the feverish sufferer; there is the gentle soothing of the voice, the encouraging and animating smile, the unwearied tenderness, and, above all, an occasional word or sentence that speaks peace and hope, and 'points to Heaven.'

Those to whom she had ministered were loud in her praise; the heart is softened at such times, and overflows with gratitude. Even Mrs. Kent was obliged to acknowledge, in the course of a few months, that some how or other Anna did not seem to have degraded herself. And as she could not really understand the matter, she determined to go and see old Deacon Harman, who had just recovered from a severe attack of rheumatism.

"Well, Deacon," she exclaimed, "you are likely to get about again."

"Yes, thanks be to God and a good nurse."

"I suppose your wife took good care of you."

"She did all she could, but that was little; for she is feeble herself, and we have grown old together."

"But you have daughters."

"My daughters are married and have families of their own, and I could not call upon them."

"Then I suppose," said Mrs. Kent, with a nervous movement of her mouth and chin, "you had Nurse Hope."

"Yes, it was some time before she could come, for she is always with somebody, there is no want of employment; so my wife sent for old Nabby, that used to go out a nursing when she had nothing else to do. I remember the first morning Anna came. I had had a pretty bad night. Nabby got to sleep, and let the fire go out, and I was cold and in pain. I was sort of dozing, but I could just see what was going on, and she came along side of my bed so light that she hardly seemed flesh and blood; now when Nabby came, she jarred me so that I cringed all over. Well, Anna did not say a word, but she put her hand on my forehead and under my throat, and then she heated flannel, and put round my throat and over my hands, and wrapped up my feet. I felt in a new world; and then I looked up, and she smiled and nodded, but did not speak. Presently she came again, just so softly, and had a cup and a spoon in her hand, and said, 'Here is something that will make you feel better;' and so it did. It is only those who have been sick, that can tell what good nursing is. Now when Nabby came, she always put her mouth close to my ear, and screamed out, 'Come, Deacon, rouse up, it is time to take your medicine.'"

"After all," said Mrs. Kent, "it seems to be

about as good a trade as any body could have hit upon, for, as they say of a shoemaker, people always will want shoes. Pray what wages did you give Nurse Hope?"

"I did not give her any *wages*," said the Deacon; "it makes no odds what she asks, for she seems to be all the time serving you for love; but, when she was going, I slipped a twenty dollar bill into her hand."

"A twenty dollar bill! well, I never heard such luck. Would you believe it, she sold an old wooden case for forty dollars! But there never was a truer saying, — 'When it rains it pours.'"

Mrs. Kent proceeded immediately to Anna's lodgings. She happened to be at home. After many inquiries, which Anna patiently answered, she said, — "I have been thinking you must be sometimes engaged when you are sent for."

"I am," replied she.

"What do they do then?"

"They get somebody else."

"I suppose you would not think it any interference, if I was to take up nursing?"

"No," said Anna, smiling, "every body must take care of themselves."

"That is true, and then every body will be taken care of. When people send to you, will you recommend me, if you are engaged?"

"How can I? I don't know what sort of a nurse you are."

"A pretty good one, I can tell you."



"But you have young children; what will you do with them?"

"Sure enough," said she, brought to her recollection; "well, I will keep to straw bonnets. You have got a nice room; you must be making money; I suppose you put something into the savings bank. There was the forty dollars you got for that palt—— for that wooden case, and then the twenty Deacon Harman gave you," — Anna looked surprised. "O, there are little birds in the air, — forty and twenty make sixty; now that is a very good sum for the savings bank."

"I did not put the twenty into the savings bank," said Anna.

"That was very unwise in you; I hope you have not spent it."

"I have put part of it out at interest," said Anna, looking amused at the wonder of her persevering relation.

"That is another thing; I hope you got good security?"

"The best. — Mrs. Kent," said she, seriously, "I do not mean to mislead you, neither do I feel bound to answer all your questions. When I returned from Deacon Harman's, I hoped to have a little time to myself; but that night I heard that the poor Irish family, who live on the outskirts of the village, were all ill of a fever, and suffering for the necessities of life. I went immediately to see them. The mother was confined to the bed, and two sick children on a blanket on the floor. They were suffering for

want of everything, and from the twenty dollars I supplied them with what was wanted, and stayed and took care of them."

For a few minutes Mrs. Kent was silent, and then said, "I don't see, cousin Anna, how any body that is so good as you are, could say they had put their money out at interest when they had given it away."

"I will tell you," said Anna. "There was a celebrated physician who lived in Leyden, and he was as good as he was skilful. He was employed by the rich and the poor, but he always said, 'the poor were his best pay-masters, for God was their security.' " \*

"Did he grow rich?"

"Yes, but not by attending on the poor, for it was in another world that he looked for his recompense; and now you know what I meant when I told you the money was at interest."

"You are a very good girl, Anna," said Mrs. Kent, evidently moved.

"I have had the best of examples and the best of instruction, and, added to that, the best of books for my guide, — the Bible."

"It is an excellent book. I don't read in it so much as I ought, because Mary carries mine to school."

Anna rose and went to her closet, and took from it a plain, but well-printed Bible. "Will you give this to Mary," said she, "with my love, and keep yours to read yourself?"

\* Boerhaave.

"I wonder," said Mrs. Kent, after thanking her, "how I could think you would degrade yourself by going out a nursing."

"I never thought it was the employment that degraded us," said Anna, "provided it was honest and useful, but the manner in which we performed it. There is none so low but it may be used to promote the service of God, and none so high but it may be degraded by bad conduct."

But we leave Anna to the exercise of her occupation; one that she had chosen with prayers and tears, without reference to emolument, and in direct opposition to the cultivation and refinement of her taste; yet any one who saw her light step, her smooth and serene brow, her eye beaming with that peculiar radiance which comes from a mind at peace, would have decided that she had found that joy, with which the stranger intermeddled not.

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## CHAPTER X.

### THE PROGRESS DOWNWARD.

"All his hopes  
Tend downward; his ambition is to sink,  
To reach a depth profounder still, and still  
Profounder, in the fathomless abyss  
Of folly plunging in pursuit of death."

THERE are two undermining principles often at work in the human character; vanity and the

love of pleasure. Vanity is usually considered with great indulgence as long as it does not interfere with the humors of others. It is a common thing to say, that it is harmless, that it hurts no one but the possessor. But this is not true. A man who injures himself, injures one of the great family of mankind, he wounds a link in the mighty chain that connects the whole. Vanity is like the weed that overruns our meadows, destroying the cultivation of the land and rendering it barren and waste. It may be truly said "to grow by what it feeds on," till it becomes inordinate and indiscriminating, and, ostrich-like, swallows stones and rubbish. It is not only destructive to the useful and agreeable properties of the character, but it saps the foundation of all that is noble and elevated, and often produces moral and mental imbecility. But this is not the most important view; it cannot coëxist with true religion; if the one increases, the other decreases; for humility and charity are the virtues preëminently recommended by the Gospel, while vanity exalts itself and exaggerates the faults of others.

In Walter's character both of these undermining principles were early at work. His subsequent intercourse with Mr. Hope and Anna, with the mortification which is the scourge of vanity, had checked its progress. His love of pleasure became chastened, and his mind was absorbed in serious study. The very delight he experienced in what he considered his growth in grace, might have led him to distrust the

soundness of his views. The man who finds nothing but paths of pleasantness in his religious walk, must but slightly explore the vast tract upon which he has entered. If he looks back he will find many deviations to humble him, if forward many rugged ascents to climb. No one who practises the duty of self-examination can find religion all pleasantness. It is not his virtues upon which he is to dwell, but his deficiencies. He who thinks it an easy matter to become a Christian, may doubt his self-application of the precepts of Christ.

Walter, when he entered upon the scene of temptation, was an ardent professor of Christianity; but there was hollowness in his views. Anna had said most truly, "if he trembled more for himself, she should tremble less for him." But had it been otherwise, had he been as sincere as he thought himself, his apostasy would have furnished no argument against religion. We do not decry the virtue of temperance, because a man who has once practised it becomes intemperate; it is still none the less a virtue. So, too, in the case of religion. If it were possible to practise faithfully religious duties, and at the same time become irreligious, the skeptic might exult; but such a supposition is a solecism without sense or meaning. We do not expect benefit from the most common prescriptions unless we faithfully practise them. It is a mistake to suppose that religion has any inherent power of retaining its place in our hearts; that office is given to ourselves. "Keep thy heart

with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life." "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." God gives the blessing, but we are to use the means he has appointed; we are to use them constantly and perseveringly. The work of religion is never over; it does not perform a cure, and leave us to sit down with folded hands, in the security of health; but we must be constantly applying its remedies; if we neglect them, we become in the scriptural sense backsliders.

Such now was Walter. The last and perhaps the strongest check was removed. He returned to the city in a state of mind not to be envied. As he entered the door of his lodging-house, Heath met him with a hurried air. "I have been on the watch for you all day," said he; "but don't let us stay talking here; take up your trunk and follow me;" and he caught up part of Walter's baggage and preceded him up the stairs. When they arrived at the chamber and had both entered, he hastily locked the door.

"Now tell me," said he, "is it over? are you married?"

"No," replied Walter.

"Have you given up your uncle's check?"

"No," again answered Walter; "but what does all this mean? why have you locked the door?"

"If you have the check, it is all well," said Heath; "but yesterday, Norberry was after you with a constable, and I only got him off by telling

him that you had gone for a supply of cash. I dare say he is lying in wait for you ; but you may bid him defiance with the check in your hand."

Walter turned pale. "You know," said he, "it was conditional; my uncle entrusted it to my honor."

"True," said Heath, "and it is to save your honor you will make use of it. But what a clumsy fellow you are, not to have brought the marriage to a close, and secured the money according to the condition. However, I will tell you of a plan that will save your scruples. I know a man who will let you have the money on moderate interest, with such good security as you can give him, and the check may remain untouched."

To this, after a few moments, Walter assented, and requested Heath to transact the affair. "The truth is," said he, "I have my father's sanction for withdrawing a small sum, though not to pay a debt like this."

From this time Walter passed from one excess to another; his object was to get rid of thought. He no longer hesitated about using the sum entrusted to his honor; it melted away before his own and Heath's extravagance, and at the end of a few months he began to feel that he should soon be penniless. Heath proposed to him trying his luck in a lottery, — the tempting resort of idleness and speculation. A number of tickets were purchased, in which they agreed to go shares. The lottery was drawn,

and he was a gainer. He ventured again and again, and fortune seemed to be propitious. "Follow it up," said Heath, "now is the time." There are none that express such contempt at superstition as those who scoff at an overruling Intelligence; to believe in Providence is with them the very essence of fanaticism, and yet they will pay blind adoration to chance, or luck, or some other idol that they enthrone; they will devote all the calculations of their minds to its turnings and windings.

Heath had often given Walter proof of his confidence by borrowing large sums of ready money. He had found out the art, too, of consolidating their mutual expenses, and throwing the whole on Walter. He now offered to take tickets with him to any amount. Thus encouraged, Walter ventured the remnant of the sum entrusted to him by his uncle. When the day arrived on which the wheel of fortune began to revolve, Walter watched the numbers as they came up with feverish anxiety; it was his last chance for restoring the deposit; it was the decision between comparative wealth and independence, and poverty and disgrace. If he could only win a few of the prizes, he was made for life. Confused ideas floated in his head of propitiating some overruling destiny by vows and promises. He even went so far as to secretly stipulate, that if he might gain the highest prize, he would take his gains and return to his parents. How true it is, that every mind believes in some presiding influence; perhaps it is one of the



strongest presumptive evidences in favor of the existence of a God, that those who seek to dethrone him, build up some Juggernaut of their own, which they call luck, or chance, or destiny. All feel the want of something beyond the present.

At length the lottery was drawn, and Walter found to his unutterable delight, that his part of the prizes amounted to sixteen hundred dollars. A latent thought was in his mind, that there had been efficacy in his vows and promises.

"Now," said Heath, "you must draw a few more thousands, and then you may set the world and the world's law at defiance. You were born under a lucky star; other people have to toil for a fortune, but you have only to call for the goddess and she comes. Let me have a share in every ticket; there is no easier way of serving a friend."

"Perhaps," said Walter, with that hesitation which a person unaccustomed to business and money concerns always feels in dunning; "perhaps it will be better to settle for the other tickets, as I paid for the whole."

"Certainly," replied Heath; "this moment, if you will go with me to my lodgings." Walter was ashamed of appearing urgent, and said any other time would do as well. They had reached the lottery-office, and again Walter purchased a large number of the tickets. Weeks intervened before the lottery was drawn, and his expenditures went on. He was a child in every art important to accumulation, his resources became

very low ; but he looked forward to the drawing of the lottery to place him in affluence ; his chances were more than doubled, how could he fail ? The important day came, and his fate was determined. For the sixteen hundred dollars he received only one hundred. Disappointment and the prospect of penury had blunted Walter's feelings, and he now urged Heath to pay him for the tickets.

"How unfortunate, my dear fellow," said he, "that you did not take it when I urged it upon you ! I protest to you I have not now fifty dollars in the world ; but have patience and I will pay you." The same evening Heath brought two hundred dollars. "This," said he, "I won last night at Warner's. I turned thirty dollars into two hundred in five minutes. This, after all, is the way to grow rich ; a lottery depends on chance ; but in play, you can bring into use the powers of your mind."

After a few ineffectual struggles Walter accompanied Heath to the gaming-table ; he staked and won. Night after night was spent in this manner, and Walter became in a short time a confirmed gamester. To this vice there seem to be no initiatory steps, there is no entering the gulf by degrees ; one plunge, and it is over. At first Walter said it was more philanthropical to grow rich by gaming, than to fatten on the poor man's industry, or to wring usurious interest from the widow and the orphan ; but he soon ceased to justify himself ; effort was past ; religion and conscience no longer spoke to him

even in a still small voice. It may be supposed that he was now comparatively at rest, for it has been said, that the goadings of conscience produce the keenest pangs the human mind can endure. But perhaps uncontrolled vice has yet greater, even where conscience and remorse are silenced,—where *will* is alone the rule of action. Vice is made up of selfishness; all that opposes its success excites the whirlwind and the tempest. "There is no peace to the wicked, saith my God," and so say observation and worldly knowledge. The struggles of conscience find an opiate in temporary and slight compromise; but confirmed vice depends for its enjoyment wholly on self-gratification. This, neither wealth, nor high birth, nor external advantages can secure; the possessor of these is essentially placed on a level with the lowest and most degraded of the human race whose object is the same. Could he lose his existence in that of the brute, he might enjoy a little space of life; for there no "fury passions" operate. But, with the vicious, these are constantly at work, and, though conscience were annihilated, these would still inflict misery; where revenge, disappointment, malice, and hatred fill the heart and are the business of life, happiness must be unknown.

Walter no longer strove to delude himself. By dunning, at the moment of success, he had received back part of the sum due to him from Heath. This was immediately staked. Heath proposed that they should throw for the remainder, double or quits. One throw of the dice

cleared Heath from his debt, and the few hours that followed left Walter penniless, and several hundreds in debt. "It is my turn now to borrow," he said. "Lend me a small sum that I may recover what I have lost."

"That is against all the rules and principles of play," said Heath, "to borrow from a winner. You cannot expect *us* to furnish you with weapons against ourselves."

"And yet," said Walter, indignantly, "you had no scruple in borrowing from me."

"Do you not perceive, my dear fellow, how entirely the case is changed? Then we were not antagonists; you could aid *me* without injuring yourself; on the contrary, you derived benefit from that act of kindness, for there was a prospect that it might enable me to repay you; but now, what you win, I lose the chance of gaining; therefore it would be foolish in any of us to lend each other."

"This is your principle of universal philanthropy," said Walter, with a sneer, such as he had learnt to employ against things high and holy.

"It is the doctrine of common sense and reason," retorted Heath.

Walter left him with a throbbing head and bursting heart. To pay his gambling debts was a point of honor; all others were merely those of justice and integrity, — far too commonplace motives for a gamester. He returned home in a state of mind, which required his *now* usual potation of brandy and water to enable him to

endure it. He had just swallowed an intoxicating draught when a stage-driver stopped at the door and delivered him a letter. It was from his father, and ran thus:—

“ My dear Son,

“ What is the reason that we get no letters from you ? I am sure you cannot have heard of your mother’s sickness ; such a kind and affectionate son would let nothing prevent his coming. It has been a hard season with us. I must withdraw the sum I have placed at the savings bank, and enclose an order for it. I prefer taking this to appropriating any part of the sum your uncle offered. Should you be prevented by business from coming immediately, forward a hundred dollars to me by the post.”

Walter read the letter with his faculties confused, but the order he perfectly understood ; it was for a thousand dollars, the economical savings of his parents. A small part of this sum might enable him to redeem all he had lost ; — there could be no harm in borrowing a trifle ; there was no doubt but his luck must be on the turning point, — it had reached its extreme, — and what a triumph over Heath he might gain ! how he panted to see him stripped of every thing, writhing in agony, and experiencing his own torments ! It was not possible to obtain the money on so short a notice at the bank ; the order, however, was as good. With a hurried step he proceeded once more to the rendezvous. We turn

with disgust from the details. Inflamed to madness by ill luck and intemperance, the whole sum was by degrees staked and lost, and the order transferred to Heath. Walter was conveyed to his lodgings almost without consciousness. After twenty-four hours of sleep resembling annihilation, his recollection began to return, and a horrid remembrance of the late scenes rushed upon him. For a week he lingered on, more dead than alive, except in mental agony. No one came near him of all his late associates. At the end of this period another letter arrived from his father.

“ My dear Son,

“ You cannot have received my letter dated the 16th enclosing the order, and yet it was sent by a careful hand. You must be sick! our hearts are filled with anxiety. Your poor mother suffers great pain; the doctor has pronounced her disorder incurable. But this is not the worst; we hear strange rumors about you. No one asks me after my son. It is all a blank, as if we never had one. Have we been too proud? have we relied too much on your learning and good disposition? And yet that was not what we most thought of; it was your piety and love to God that made us feel you could not become a backslider. We petitioned the Almighty for blessings on you, as if you had nothing to do for yourself. ‘ My son, my son, would to God I had died for thee!’ but God accepts no substitute for personal holiness. ‘ Give me thy heart,’ is his command.

"My own health is poor; I cannot work as I used to do, and Sam Carter has returned to the factory, so that everything has gone behindhand. They say nobody dies of a broken heart, but I sometimes think it brings on diseases that end in death. Death! that is a fearful sound to the sinner; but they say an infidel believes in no future state; he thinks he is to die like a tree that is felled, and there is the end of him. But you don't believe *that* Walter, — no, you cannot if you try.

"Come home to us, my son; do not let any shame or remorse keep you away. Who shall forgive, if not your own parents? You shall hear no word of reproach from us; come home; the sight of you will comfort us. Your mother would suffer for some of the luxuries necessary in her present state, if it were not for kind friends. Anna Hope has taken up her abode with us; she never leaves your mother." — Thus far had Robert written; the sequel was in Anna's hand and dated the next morning.

"Oh, Walter, prepare yourself for new calamity; yesterday afternoon your father's house took fire and was burned to the ground. He has injured his right arm, and cannot write. Your mother but just escaped with her life. Make haste home, delay not a moment; they want all the comfort God has left them. Your father requests me to say, he is suffering for the sum he wrote to you to withdraw from the bank; do not send it, but come immediately."

We cannot describe the state of mind, in which this letter left Walter. Suddenly he seized his hat, and flew to Heath's lodgings. "I have come," said he, "to entreat, to implore you to lend me a hundred dollars."

"On what security?" demanded Heath.

"I have *none*; for the sake of charity,— for my father's sake; he is burnt out. Read this letter;" and he gave it to him.

Heath read it through. "I cannot," said he, "consistently with my principles."

"Fifty, then; it is not for play, it is not for myself," said Walter, worked up almost to phrensy, "it is for my father."

"I tell you," said Heath, "I will not lend the old hoary-headed hypocrite a farthing."

Walter sprung upon him with the fury of a tiger, and grasped his throat. Heath turned black in the face. A fellow lodger who was only separated by a thin partition, heard the scuffle and rushed in. Walter released his hold. "Secure him," gasped Heath; "he is a murderer." Walter was seized and committed to jail.



## CHAPTER XI.

## THE BACKSLIDER'S HOME.

"To learn in God's own school the Christian part  
And bind the task assigned thee to thine heart.  
For reason still, unless divinely taught,  
Whate'er she learns, learns nothing as she ought.  
When one that holds communion with the skies  
Has filled her urn where these pure waters rise,  
And once more mingles with us meaner things,  
'T is e'en as if an angel shook her wings."

WE must now return to the village, and account for Robert's last letter. It was long before any rumors reached him of his son's misconduct. All had treated with respect a father's feelings; but there is an instinctive perception in affection; though its very strength blinds it to many imperfections in the object of attachment, it is eager in its requirements of others. Mr. Smith felt that there was a deficiency in friendly interest; no-one said, as formerly, "When have you heard from Walter? Is not he coming home soon?" Anna, too, never mentioned his name. But there was one person who always seemed to bear him in mind, and that was Mrs. Kent. There was a frequency in her inquiries that struck Robert as peculiar. "You are the only person," said he one day, "that seems to remember my poor Walter; nobody mentions him but you."

"Perhaps they think," replied she, "you have nothing pleasant to tell them; but, for my part, I never thought the little innocent faults of young

people ought to be set down against them. I am sure if we can't overlook faults in others, we have no right to expect our own will be overlooked."

"There is one," said Robert, solemnly, "who never overlooks the smallest fault."

Mrs. Kent was silent a few moments, and then said, "But you may take comfort, Mr. Smith, for you know we are told, that 'God is not strict to mark iniquity.'"

"We are told," said Robert, "that he is patient and long-suffering, but pardon is only promised to the penitent."

"Well, don't you think," said Mrs. Kent, assuming rather the air of a polemic, "that there is a difference between little faults and great ones?"

"Certainly," replied Mr. Smith, "the same difference that there is between little children and grown people,—they may be very small at first, but they soon attain full growth."

"Well, I must say I am not one of them that give a young man up because he is a little wild; but it does seem strange, that one who was so remarkable for his religion that we all thought he was a saint, should become"—she stopped.

"Become what?" said Mr. Smith, sternly.

"Why, nothing, only like other young men."

From this time Robert's eyes were opened; he could no longer be deceived; by degrees the truth burst upon him. He wrote and received answer. In this instance, Walter was not to be deceived, as the letter never reached him. About the same time Mrs. Smith was seized with a com-

plaint which wore the appearance of terminating fatally. It was every way a sad year for them; the drought had destroyed the hay, and withered the grain. Susan's care and activity were wanting to make it 'one of the thriving years.' Sam Carter was dismissed, and a girl hired in his stead to assist Mrs. Smith. Anna no sooner learnt the state of the family, than she hastened to them. "You once invited me," she said, "to live with you; I have come now to request it myself. Let me live with you, and be to you as a daughter."

It seems as if it were necessary that virtuous characters, in order to produce their full influence by example, should exhibit resignation and cheerfulness under suffering. This, united to the purifying effect that affliction has on the mind and heart, may account for the trying dispensations to which the good are often called. The time had arrived when Robert and his wife were to be tested by affliction. The unusual expenses of her sickness had come heavily upon them, but still Mr. Smith knew that his resources were more than sufficient, and he wrote to Walter, enclosing the order for withdrawing his deposit from the savings bank. A fortnight passed, and he neither came nor wrote. He then began the second letter; but as he wrote, his heart became full, and, unable to repress his tears, he put his letter into his pocket and walked out to his farm. He busied himself in many little occupations for which he had not hitherto found time; a few stones were to be replaced

upon the wall, and the leaves of autumn to be collected into little heaps ; some scattered ears of corn were yet to be gleaned, — for he had learnt to gather up the fragments. His orchard was next to be visited, and the unprofitable branches cut away. “How beautifully,” thought he, “has Christ illustrated his doctrine by the labors of the husbandman !” As he leaned against the wall, his thoughts, in spite of his efforts, dwelling with sad forebodings on his son, he observed a thick cloud of smoke rolling over his head ; he advanced a few steps and beheld his house in flames ! The girl who had been hired, had taken a candle to hunt in the garret under the eaves of the house for some article she wanted ; a spark caught some straw that was thrown there, and, before the inhabitants were aware, the roof was in a blaze.

Anna and Mrs. Smith were quietly seated in her chamber, when the terrified voice of the girl, screaming “Fire !” first alarmed them. Anna threw up the window, the flames and smoke were gathering round it, she hastily closed it. “Be calm,” said she, to Mrs. Smith ; “there is no danger for us.” A narrow flight of stairs from the chamber communicated with the entry below. “Let us save this,” said Mrs. Smith, laying her hand on a wooden chest which contained a store of sheets and pillow-cases of her own spinning and weaving, and which she still fondly hoped was to be a wedding present for her son ; “help me, Anna,” said she, trying to move it. With difficulty they got it endwise to

the head of the stairs. "Let it remain," exclaimed Anna, "till somebody comes, think only of yourself;" and she took her arm to lead her down the stairs; but the agitated woman still pertinaciously held by the chest, and suddenly collecting all her strength, she gave it a violent push. It tottered for a moment on the edge of the stairs, and then fell forward, wholly stopping up the passage, and cutting off all possibility of escape. In vain they tried to move it, it was completely wedged in. Anna rushed to the window, but the flames were rapidly approaching; and when she opened it, the smoke poured in, and she hastily closed it again. Had she been alone she would have sprung from it, as the least frightful alternative; but how could she leave her companion? She sunk on her knees; the room filled with smoke, Mrs. Smith was already senseless on the floor, and Anna gasping for breath. At that critical moment the voice of Mr. Smith was heard on the stairs calling to his wife. "The chest, the chest!" exclaimed Anna. Sounds of the axe followed, and the passage was free. The women were conveyed into the open air, and Mrs. Smith was restored with difficulty. Mr. Smith found that he had seriously injured his arm in endeavouring to force an entrance.

The next day, the letter, with Anna's postscript, was forwarded to Walter. A week passed in anxious expectation of his arrival. Susan grew weaker every day; she was fully sensible that her life was drawing to a close, and con-

versed calmly upon it. "I have but one earnest wish," said she; "it is, that I may see my son before I die; perhaps I may be permitted to watch over him after I go hence. Do you think, Anna, we are permitted to revisit this world? If we are, we may be of more service to those we love, than we have ever been."

"There is one thing," said Anna, "which we certainly know, — that our heavenly Father watches over those we love, and what is our guardianship compared to his?"

"That is true," said Mrs. Smith, with a feeble and unearthly smile; "and though we should not revisit them on earth, we shall, ere long, see them in heaven. But if we are not to recognise them, it would hardly seem to be heaven."

"We have every reason," replied Anna, "to believe that we shall. That there is a dissolution of our organs of sense, we know; but who shall tell us there is any change in our spiritual existence? Who shall tell us, that the soul goes through any transformation? Divest it of the earthly temple in which it dwells, and we only remove the barrier that separates it from the world of spirits."

"You think, then," said Mrs. Smith, "that, when we close our eyes on this world, we open them upon another?"

"I think," said Anna, "the transition is far more glorious than we can imagine. The other evening you went to sleep exhausted by pain; when you waked you were free from it, and you said you felt in heaven. But think for a mo-

ment of awaking, without any of the organs through which pain enters. Yet this is a low conception of heaven ; for there are joys of which the ear has not heard and the heart cannot conceive."

"Ah, Anna," said Mrs. Smith, mournfully, "you may say it is a low conception, because you do not know what it is to suffer bodily pain. I hope it is no sin to feel desirous to be gone."

"It cannot be a sin," replied Anna, "for suffering is one of the ways that God takes to bring us nearer to himself."

"I used to think," said Mrs. Smith, "that it was a fearful thing to die ; but it seems to me now that I am every day dying."

"Think that you are every day drawing nearer to God, and there will be no terror in death."

"My poor son!" said Mrs. Smith, with a groan ; "but perhaps it is all a mistake. Robert has only heard flying reports ; if I could but see him once before I die!"

"This," said Anna, "is the submission to his will, that God requires of you. If all your wishes were granted, you would have no opportunity to practise Christian resignation ; but this is the trial God sends you."

"There are many good books," said Mrs. Smith, after a pause, "that teach us how to bear affliction under various forms, — under the loss of dear friends, the loss of this world's goods, or even the total loss of health ; but I don't remember any that teach us how we are to bear the sins of those that are dear to us ; how we are

to support," she added, clasping her hands, "the ruin of a son!"

"There is no affliction," said Anna, "which may not be sanctified to us for our spiritual good; and this good, we know, is the great end of religion. We know not what are the wisest and surest means to this end; but, whatever they are, we may rest assured that God will use them. It is not his object to save us from suffering, but often, by suffering to purify us from sin. To see those who are near and dear to us treading a downward path, is the heaviest calamity we are called to endure; nor do I know of any human consolation. But those divine supports, which apply to all sorrows, apply to this; God reigns; he sometimes permits a lesser evil to prevent a greater; and what we know not now, we shall know hereafter. With Him, *all is love*; but with us, there are many selfish feelings that sharpen our agony, much of worldly mortification, and much of pride and ambition. All this separates us from God, and is, in truth, love of ourselves mingling with purer and holier affections."

"You say truth, Anna," said Mrs. Smith. "There is much of worldly mortification, of pride and ambition that mingles with my feelings, and comes to haunt my dying bed! Walter, my beautiful Walter! All the world said he would be an honor to our grey hairs. Do you remember, Anna, the first time he entered your father's pulpit?"

"I was at home with my dear father," replied



Anna, in a low voice, the whole scene recurring to her mind." How much happier were her recollections than if she had quitted him!

"I am sorry," continued Mrs. Smith, "that you did not see him; there was so much modesty in his manner,—his whole heart was engaged in his subject, and there was such a sweet and holy sound in his voice!"

Anna hastily rose and walked to the window. "Dear Mrs. Smith," said she, "do not torture yourself or me by these useless recollections."

"I have often thought, Anna," said Mrs. Smith, with the querulousness of sickness, "that you don't like to hear me talk of poor Walter, and yet you used to love him."

"I love him now," said Anna, while the tears rolled down her cheeks, "with Christian love."

"I hope you will yet marry him." Anna was silent. "Promise me that you will, and I shall die contented."

"My dear Mrs. Smith, this is not the submission we spoke of; leave all things to your Heavenly Father; this is the obedience he requires. If you were to see your son, it would only be for a sorrowful parting; a few more sighs, a few more tears than might otherwise be shed. Who knows, if he has erred, but this heavy affliction may be the very means of recalling him to piety and virtue."

"There is comfort in that thought," said the mother, clasping her hands. "O how joyfully would I die for him!"

From this time she spoke no more of her earnest desire to see him.

"I have been thinking," said she, one day, "that it is a wicked thing in me to have such an inordinate love of this world's wealth."

"I have never perceived that you had it," said Anna; "on the contrary, I have thought that both you and your husband have discovered great equanimity in the loss of your worldly possessions."

"O, but the chest! how near I came to sacrificing your life as well as my own."

"If it is that which distresses you," said Anna, "I think you may make yourself quite easy. I don't think you were in your right mind at that time, any more than a lady I once heard of, whose house took fire, and she seized a large pumpkin and carried it half a mile to secure it."

"You are a comforter; you do not try to magnify my fault, though you might have lost your life by it."

"No," replied Anna; "but if involuntary deviations weigh so heavily on us, in the near prospect of death, what must be the situation of those, whose sins rise in terrible array before them!"

"My poor Walter!" said Mrs. Smith, rather breathing than articulating the words.

While these scenes were passing in Mrs. Smith's sick room, those of a more enlivening nature were taking place in the village. They had given Mr. Ward, who was a candidate, a call, and the day of his ordination had arrived. It was an important day, and even Robert felt some exhilaration of spirits. Both he and his wife

urged Anna to quit the sick room, and join in the services and festivity; but she resolutely declined, and kept her station by the pillow of the dying woman.

It is one of the occupations of a country parish to provide their clergyman with a suitable wife. On the present occasion many were discussed, and some few mentioned Anna; but Mrs. Kent, whose daughter Mary was just coming into life, was of opinion, that such a thing was not to be thought of; she said, that if Anna had never gone out a nursing, she might have stood a tolerable chance, and that it was sorely against her advice, that she ever did. Mr. Ward, however, did not seem to view the matter in the same light. Anna had lost nothing of the refinement of her appearance by her employment; she was still the same gentle, unassuming being; her brow as fair, her step as light, and her voice as soothing. He had often seen her in the chambers of the sick, and soon heard her story. There is a little romance in the sensibility of youth. He entered into her character with enthusiasm. The more he saw of her, however, the less confidence he felt in his hope, that she might one day resume her place in the parsonage, and again become its mistress. He saw that self-devotion to duty was her engrossing principle.

Mrs. Smith's disorder was now rapidly drawing to its end. Anna never left her for a moment, and she finally yielded her last breath in her arms. As soon as the funeral was over, Anna

returned to her own lodgings, and, after a day or two given to reflection and rest, resumed the active duties of life; not, however, before Mr. Ward had attempted to accomplish the object nearest his heart, — of securing to himself such a friend, who would animate him by her example, and assist him by her counsel.

Anna replied to him, that few had been called so early in life, as she had been, to see the uncertainty of earthly happiness; that she felt bound to speak openly to him, or she might be thought unreasonable in declining such bright prospects. "But when I tell you," she added, "that the affections of my heart have been thus early blighted, you will not wonder that I have no courage for new engagements. God speaks to us through events; I feel as if he now demanded my whole heart, my whole life. I have recovered my cheerfulness solely in the exercise of duty. I hope I am able to communicate some good to others, and it is now the only medium through which I can receive tranquillity."

It was in vain Mr. Ward urged, that all these principles would apply to a different situation, and that her sphere of usefulness would be extended. She said it required a disengaged and light heart to enter upon such duties, and hers was filled and engrossed. It was evident that the subject was painful to her, and Mr. Ward left her, convinced that there was neither procrastination nor evasion to befriend him.

## CHAPTER XII.

## THE END.

It must not be supposed that Robert's anxiety and distress about his son had diminished, during these events. It was impossible for him to undertake the journey, or he would have set out in pursuit of him; but a neighbour, Mr. Hart, who was going to Boston, offered to take a letter, and promised to find him out. Another wearisome fortnight passed, when he received a letter from his neighbour informing him that he could find no traces of Walter, and he must have left the city. This letter was soon followed by another from Captain Brewster. He informed Robert that he arrived the week before, and accidentally met Mr. Hart; and that they had joined in the search for Walter. "I will not tell you," continued he, "*where* we found him, — and yet you must know all. He had been committed to jail for an assault, and had lain there five months; so you see the poor boy was not to blame in not coming to see you. He is very earnest to see you and Anna Hope, and begs you will come to Boston. He says he has sent for the young woman a great many times, but she would not come. I sometimes think he is not quite in his right mind; but he asked me to put this bit of paper for her in my letter, and said he knew that would do it."

Inclosed was a sealed paper without any direction. It was given to Anna. It contained only a few incoherent words, entreating her to come to him, and written in horrible characters, which he explained by saying, they were traced with his blood. "Will you go, Anna?" said Mr. Smith.

"Most certainly," she replied; "if I can do Walter no good, I may at least assist you."

Captain Brewster had enclosed a bank-bill for their expenses. When they arrived, he conducted them immediately to the jail. They found Walter stretched upon a pallet bed, much emaciated, and apparently in a rapid consumption.

"You have come at last," said he, in a hollow voice, seizing Anna's hand; "I knew that note would bring you. I have written a great many with ink, but they did no good; but this was written with my blood. Do you know," said he, in a low voice, "I have made a contract? but it is not out a good while yet."

"My poor, poor son!" said Robert, falling on his neck. Walter hid his face.

"Walter," said Anna, in a soothing tone, "speak to your father;—we have come a long way to see you."

"Father! father!" exclaimed he, in the melodious accent of his early days, as if some recollection came over him; then raising himself up he threw his arms around his neck and burst into tears.

It was not difficult to get Walter released from prison. He was conveyed to suitable lodgings, and the best of medical attendance provided.

His incoherent sentences were sometimes horrible. He once bared his arm, and showed Anna a frightful gash upon it. "This," said he, "is what sealed the contract; now I have only to sign my name, and I can do any thing I please."

After a few days, the fever on his brain began to subside, and intervals of reason returned. He suffered the wound on his arm to be dressed, and often slightly reverted to scenes that had passed, and seemed to have a confused idea that it was another, not himself, whom Anna had formerly known. "That one," said he, "had a mother, but I have none."

"You have been very sick, my dear Walter," said Anna, "and your mind and body have been disordered; but I hope both will be well. You used to like to look at my shells; see what your kind uncle has brought me."

Walter examined them with evident pleasure. Suddenly he exclaimed, "Take them away! take them away!" Anna hastily removed the box. Hers was, indeed, a hopeless task, to soothe a mind goaded to insanity by reviving conscience. The paroxysms grew less frequent; but with returning reason his self-accusations became more intense. One day he desired her to call his father, for he had much to say to them. They seated themselves by his side, and waited his movements. At length he spoke. "Anna, I told you once I was an infidel, and I tried hard to become one. I so far succeeded as to live without God in the world; but when I was alone, I could not wholly banish him from

my mind. I told Heath so, and he laughed at me, and said it was the old-womanish stories they had put into my head when I was a boy. It may be, that those who have never been educated in the knowledge of a God may be infidels; but I was worse, for I struggled against my belief. When I first heard such sentiments advanced, I was shocked, and believed I could convert the whole race by argument. I did not see, that he who believes nothing but what can be demonstrated by his senses, leaves no ground for argument. I became familiarized to assertions that shocked me. I relinquished one religious habit after another, because it interfered with my love of pleasure. It would be difficult for me to say, whether infidelity was the cause or effect of my vice, for they went hand in hand. When I was in prison and left to the solitude of my own thoughts, then I became *mad*; though I refused to believe in God, I believed in devils. When I looked up or round, hideous faces were directly before me. I could not endure it; their horrid yells still ring in my ears, even now I hear them. At last I cut deep into my arm, and while the blood poured forth, I made a contract that if they would all begone, and not come near me for a certain number of years," — he stopped, and looked wildly.

"Walter," said Anna, "you have talked enough, you are exhausted; compose yourself, and try to go to sleep."

"Will you promise not to leave me?" said he.



"I will stay by you, we will watch over you till you wake."

It was Robert's earnest wish, to take him back to the village, but Anna advised against it; her only desire was to keep his mind from any excitation. Once Robert mentioned the subject to him. "If you wish to drive me again to madness," said he, "carry me there, — carry me to the grave of my mother, and then you will see your work completed." The subject was mentioned no more, and they calmly awaited the approach of death. It came by rapid stages; the feverish mind preyed upon the exhausted frame.

"Walter," said Anna, one day, when he appeared unusually calm, "you say, you believe there is a God, and yet you do not pray to him."

"No," replied he, "I am so lost!"

"And that is the reason why you should pray. God has heard our prayers for you, he has restored you to us, and if you pray to him he will hear yours."

"I have no words, — no thoughts."

"But you can repeat the Lord's prayer; try, let me hear you."

Walter repeated it correctly. "You think it will be no sin to repeat that?"

"No, surely; we are commanded to repeat it."

From this time he often repeated it, and sometimes added affecting petitions of his own. Once she distinguished this sentence, — "God of love, extend thy mercy to my companions in sin, suffer not one to be lost." After a few minutes he said, "I think I am able to hear

about my mother. Tell me, Anna, did she leave me her parting blessing?"

"She left her blessing; and her last thoughts, her last prayers were for you." He seemed much affected. "There was one hope on which she dwelt," continued Anna, "that her death might be the means of restoring you to virtue. This thought soothed her dying hour. She gave me a message for you, Walter; but I have not delivered it, for I thought you were too weak to bear it."

"Tell me what it was," said he.

"She desired me to say, 'that you were far more dear to her than ever, and that she would willingly die for you; but she conjured you, as you ever hoped to meet her in another world, to break off the acquaintance you had formed.'"

"Did she know of my intimacy with Heath?"

"I think not," said Anna, "but it was rumored that you kept bad company, and to this she attributed your change."

"Alas! no," said Walter, "I have tried to quiet my conscience by this subterfuge, but it will not do. They could have done me little injury, if I had not been a traitor to myself. O, Anna, my dreadful history is written on my burning brain with a pen of iron. There is no subterfuge now. I see it all!"

"Blessed be God that you do," said Anna, "and that you have yet time to seek forgiveness."

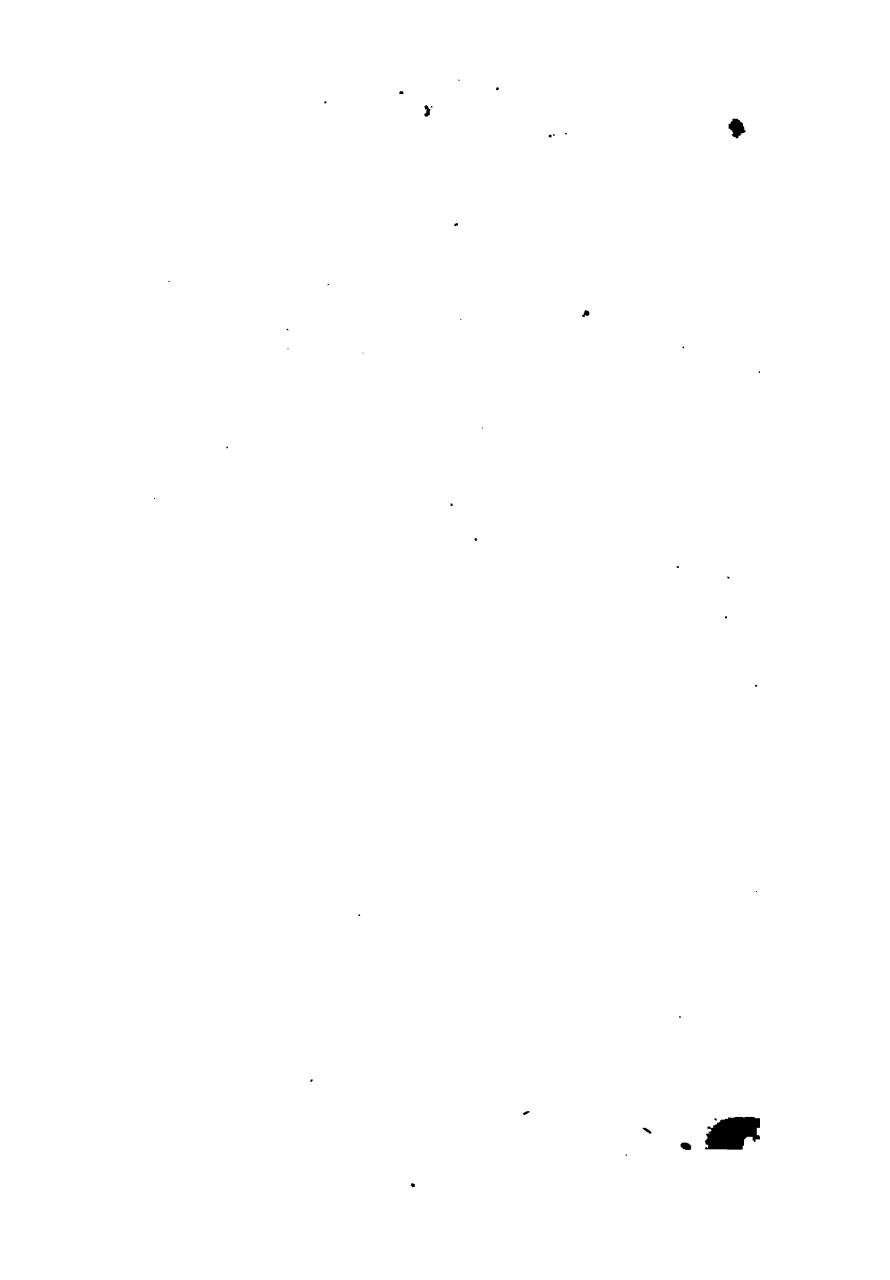
Several days passed. Many a prayer did Walter offer up, in the silent watches of the night, and fervently he thanked the Almighty that reason was restored to him. As his last moments

approached, his mind again became wandering; he begged Anna to pray for him, and not to leave him. — But we draw a veil over the closing scene, and commit him to the hands of his Maker and Judge.

A simple dwelling stands on the spot where Robert's former house stood. In this the two brothers reside. Captain Brewster has put his earnings into the house, and the farm again looks flourishing. Often at sunset George may be seen sitting under the old elm before the door, with his chair leaned back against it, and a pipe in his mouth, while Robert sits on a little turf seat near, fashioning a handle for his hoe, or axe. Anna is the superintendent of his household, his adopted daughter, and the solace and comfort of his declining years. The "ancient mariner" loves to relate to her the wonders of the deep, to which she lends an attentive and delighted ear. Who that contemplates this tranquil group, would suspect how heavily the waves of sorrow had rolled over it!

Anna has recovered her cheerfulness and bloom. If sometimes an expression of sadness passes over her countenance, it is soon exchanged for one of faith and resignation. Her time is much occupied by domestic cares; yet when want and sorrow present their claims, she is still the friend of the friendless, and again the *village nurse*.

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